GERALDWOOD:

988

BY THE AUTHOR OF

VILLEROY, AND SIGISMAR.

VOL. IV.

"I left no calling for this idle trade,
"No duty broke.——" POPE.

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988

GERALDWOOD.

CHAP. XXXII.

HE hastened to the Duke of M——'s, his philanthropic heart exulting in the hope of restoring his young favourite to the good opinion and affection of her early protectors. Nor was this the only pleasure he expected to derive from this visit, as he knew that both the Marquis and Lord John had been for some days at their father's house; yet much as he loved them, and greatly as he wished to see them, he had refused himself the gratification, until, by having spoken with Lady

 Belmont,

Belmont, he might be enabled to demand justice or entreat compassion, as the injuries or errors of our heroine might require.

Being observed in his approach to the house, Lord John hurried out to meet him. After the usual affectionate greetings, the Doctor inquired on what account they had so very unexpectedly returned, and was informed, that the rapidly declining health of the Marquis would not admit of their continuing any longer out of England. This account his uncle too soon saw confirmed, by his much altered face and emaciated form, which seemed to promise an early grave. Deeply affected, and unable to conceal his emotion, he pressed the hand, and gazed in the face of his nephew, while the silent tear stole down his cheek; nor could the assurance of the Marquis that he was greatly recovered, restore his spirits.

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The day, however, passed with tolerable gaiety, through the united efforts of Lord John and his sister, during which, Doctor Mirvan had forborn to mention Geraldwood, partly in the fear of interruption from visitors, and partly because he feared to disturb the tranquillity of his niece, whose warmth of temper and affection for her friend, rendered her extremely impatient on every subject of which she was the theme. He therefore, determined on first speaking to the Duchess by herself, but in this he was prevented; for, on the following morning, when the family were all assembled, the letters were delivered to their respective owners. Amongst them was one for her Grace, which she had no sooner opened, than she said, "Poor worthless creature, what will become of her at last? Here, Georgina, you will now be convinced how useless has been your sorrow—how fruitless would be your en-

deavours to recal the fallen Geraldwood. She is again with her seducer."

Every eye was fixed on the speaker—every ear attending to her. The letter was from Mrs Walton: it stated, that her husband had lately received several letters, the direction of which, she was confident was in the hand-writing of the infamous Miss Orphan; that, in consequence of these letters, he had again left his home, and that having prevailed with a friend to discover if he was in London, he had been traced to a shop, in company with a girl, who could be no other than the Circe who would be the destruction of his fortune, as she had already been of the peace of all those with whom their evil destiny had thrown her.

Doctor Mirvan, to whom her Grace had given the letter, after perusing, returned it, saying, that he wished he could as easily cleanse the mind of Mrs. Walton from

from mean and uncharitable ideas, as he could the conduct of that much injured girl from deserved reproach.

It was now his turn to be gazed at, and listened to—even the Duke lifted his eye from the newspaper.

Lady Georgina caught his hand.

The Doctor proceeded: "Cruelly as this unfortunate young woman has been aspersed, there are yet some left who do her justice, and by so doing have proved her mind to be as superior to those of her revengeful persecutors, and malicious calumniators, as, I trust, her fortune will be to their machinations; at least, as far as the efforts of so humble an individual as myself can avail, she shall triumph over her enemies—not even the certainty of exposing the inhumanity of a sister should deter me from proving, by my countenance and protection, the contempt which I feel for her oppressors."

Lady Georgina pressed the hand which she held, to her lips—the Duchess was much surprized at this warm defence, which, she knew her brother too well, to suppose was undertaken without just grounds to proceed upon. His allusion to herself had not passed unnoticed; she therefore hastened to assure him, that "he nor any other person could feel more infinite delight in having the innocence of that once-loved girl ascertained, than she should experience; for, notwithstanding the black ingratitude with which she had repaid the benefits she had received from herself and her family, she could not hear of her infamy and depravity without sensations of the deepest regret; nor could any thing, even now, be proposed for her interest, in which she would not cheerfully coincide."

Dr. Mirvan replied, that "much on her part was due to Geraldwood, by way of

of atonement, if, as both himself and that ill-treated girl believed, her Grace had been the contriver of the diabolical scheme to deprive her of her liberty, if not the abettor of Mrs. Walton in her groundless and malicious slanders."

The Duchess, greatly irritated, demanded an explanation. She protested, that she knew not of any scheme; nor was she the abettor of any person in the invention of malicious slanders, though, in her opinion, he would find it difficult to prove the reports of her to be either malicious or groundless.

"Then listen to your conviction," returned the Doctor; "that letter positively asserts Miss Orphan to be in London, living with, and under the protection of Mr. Walton, whereas at this hour, and for some weeks past, she has been at S——, an inmate of my house, without any other protector or friend than myself."

Without noticing the exclamations of surprize which this intelligence occasioned, he proceeded: "Nor shall she need another while I have life—I found her poor, distressed, and ill—I soothed her mind—relieved her wants—and, with God's assistance, restored her health; and it shall be my care, in future, to render her life comfortable, though I fear it exceeds my power to make it happy; for, young as she is, there appears a settled sadness at her heart, that even time will not remove. Stung with neglect—wounded by calumny—abandoned to poverty—her friends changed to enemies—their kindnesses to persecutions—it is not wonderful that her spirit is broken."

The sensations of the Marquis could no longer be suppressed—hurrying to a window, he at once gave vent to, and endeavoured to conceal his emotions; whilst his sister ecstatically pronounced,

"Io tri-

"Io triumphe! the day is my own. And throwing her arms round the neck of her uncle, then kissing one, then the other cheek, looked delighted in his face, while she said, "Why, you dear, best of all possible beings, how handsome you are to-day—my poor Geraldwood lives with you—poor," shaking her head impatiently; "yes, she has been poor, and sick, and broken-hearted, and I have never seen her—never written to her: what a wretch she must think me. Tell me, does she not say that we of this house are all alike, all mean, selfish, tiger-hearted mortals?"

Her uncle assured her, that Geraldwood's affection was by no means diminished by absence, and that he believed the most earnest desire she felt, was that of seeing her. "Let us go, then," she eagerly replied, "let us go this very day, my dearest, best of uncles. I shall know no peace, nor shall you either, until we

are upon our journey." Lord John vowed they should not go without him; and unthinkingly added, he thought his brother had better be of the party, as the change of air, and his uncle's advice, would be of benefit.

The Marquis looking at him upbraidingly, exclaimed, "No, not for worlds;" and violently striking his forehead, rushed out of the room, and was instantly followed by his self-accusing brother.

In the evening, Doctor Mirvan was somewhat surprized by the information, that a messenger from his house-keeper wished to speak with him on business of importance. On his being admitted, and the Doctor inquiring what brought him to town, he answered, that "he had just com'd up to tell his Honour, as how the young lady as lived wi' his Honour had runn'd away, bag and baggage."

To

To describe the effect which these few words had upon the company, is impossible; they gazed at each other without power to express their dismay.

The man now produced a letter from Mrs. Moore. Doctor Mirvan, after casting his eye over it, said, with a sigh, "It is true; she is gone."

"It cannot be," cried Lady Georgina; "dearest uncle, it is impossible, it cannot be."

Pressing her hand, he replied, "We must forget her, my love—she is unworthy our regard. Sister, I crave your pardon, I have thought hardly of you, but I was imposed on, deluded by an evil spirit, who had assumed the voice and aspect of the angel of truth."

Then taking the arm of the again agitated Marquis, he led him from the room, leaving the Duchess to descant on the depravity of her late protegèe—the credu-

lity of her brother—the impropriety of her daughter's friendship—and the peculiar quickness of her own discernment.

In this employment we will leave her, while we follow our forlorn heroine, whom we saw reinstated in her former lodging, and where she was again occupied in labouring for a scanty subsistence. On her arrival, she had some time combated between her wish to justify her conduct to Lady Belmont, and her reluctance to renew her acquaintance with her Ladyship. Gratitude, and the strong desire of exculpating herself, prevailed, and she went to request an audience, but was informed the Countess was out of town; since which her days had passed in melancholy, but active solitude, never going out but to return her work, and receive her hard-earned pittance. Her constitution again began to sink under confinement, want of air, and anxiety of mind.

She

She had been several weeks returned to town, when her landlady entered her room, saying, she had come as a petitioner—a friend of her's, and a good customer to boot, had procured two orders for the play; but as she could not go alone, had come to request her to accompany her; but, most unfortunately, a person had appointed that evening to transact business of moment, and she must be at home; therefore, she had come to intreat Miss Orphan to take her place, as she was fearful of disobliging her friend. Geraldwood made several objections, but they were over-ruled, and she reluctantly consented.

She joined her companion at the appointed hour. The orders were for the boxes; but our heroine, preferring the pit, thither they went: it was full, and the door closed. Geraldwood wished to return home, but her companion expressed

so

so much unwillingness, that her prudence yielding to her good-nature and wish to oblige, she accompanied her to the green boxes, where they procured good seats, and were highly entertained, until near the conclusion of the after-piece, when several young men, much intoxicated, entered their box, and had addressed several extravagant speeches to both the ladies, though our heroine's friend was by no means entitled to encomiums on either her youth or beauty.

On the dropping of the curtain, perceiving them to be unprotected, they gathered round them with offers of service, and on these being rejected, one of them seized the arm of Geraldwood, and was dragging her off, when another insisted she should go with him.

At this moment a gentleman called out, "Unhand the lady, she is under my protection."

One

One of them instantly released her, saying, "that altered the case, and perhaps that made her so cursedly squeamish;" but the other hero persisted in detaining her.

The person who had come to her assistance, addressing her as Miss Orphan, requested her to take his arm.

Exceedingly terrified, and almost unconscious of what she did, she complied; and at the same moment, recognized Mr. Walton in the person of her deliverer. A feeling of disgust prompted her to withdraw her hand, but the increasing rudeness of her assailant induced her to continue it, and to request Mr. Walton would procure her a coach. In this manner they descended the stairs, without Geraldwood's perceiving that her late companion had been separated from her in the confusion.

On reaching the lobby, Mr. Walton

was met by his servant, who told him his carriage was in readiness. He pressed our heroine to suffer it to convey her home; but on her positive refusal, he desired the man to provide a hackney-coach. This was immediately done, and Mr. Walton was conducting her to it, still followed by the drunken intruder, who assailed her with language until then unknown to her ear.

There had been a repeated cry of, "Mr. Walton's carriage stops the way;" and the coachman had been ordered to draw off; when an acquaintance seeing him advancing, called out, "He is coming, and a devilish fine girl with him."

At this moment the eyes of Geraldwood, and those of the Marquis of L—— met. She uttered a shriek, and breaking from the arm of her guide, rushed forward toward him; when casting on her a look of inconceivable contempt, he turned from her.

her. Nearly frantic, she called to him to stop; but heedless of her cries, he went on, and she lost sight of him. With her hands clasped, and her look wild and terrified, she stood motionless, gazing at the place where he had disappeared, till on Mr. Walton attempting to take her hand, she again shrieked, and would have fallen, had he not caught her in his arms.

By the assistance of some of those unfortunate females whose characters ran no hazard from performing the offices of humanity to a distressed fellow-creature, she was restored to life, and Mr. Walton, being the only person who had any knowledge of her, was on the point of conveying her to his carriage, when a gentleman came up, who, to his inquiry of what occasioned the confusion, had been told that a girl of the town was in fits, in consequence of which he cast a look of compassion on the hapless sufferer,

as

as he passed her, but on seeing her face, he exclaimed, "Almighty God, is it possible, Miss Orphan?"

At the sound of her name, she turned her eyes towards him, faintly articulating, "Delville!"

Astonished and distressed, he approached her, begging, if he could be of any service, that she would command him.

To which Mr. Walton replied, "That the lady had occasion for no other assistance than such as she already received."

But on her saying, "No, no; do not leave me, Mr. Delville;" he insisted on at least accompanying Mr. Walton to the lady's residence; and they between them conducted her to the door, where both Mr. Walton's carriage, and the hackney-coach, having been compelled to draw off, she was placed in that of Mr. Delville, where we will leave her, while we return to the Marquis, whose horror

at

at sight of his wife leaning on the arm of her supposed seducer, may be more readily imagined than described.

His first idea was to return, and take instant vengeance on the destroyer of his honour; but the recollection that she was his sister, chilled his blood, and left him sensible to no other wish, than that of flying from her. With this view he hurried on, nor for some time perceived that he had mistaken his way. This, however, enabled him to recover some degree of tranquillity before he rejoined Lady Georgina's party, who were, with her Ladyship, waiting his return to announce that their carriages were in readiness; yet his looks bespoke violent agitation, and to their inquiries respecting the situation of their equipages, he only replied, "Don't go yet."

But the house being nearly empty, and the ladies impatient, his brother urged their departure,

departure, when the Marquis drawing him aside, told him of his having seen Geraldwood and Walton, and that he feared they might not yet be gone, as she called to him to stop.

"And, did you not?" replied his Lordship.

"By Heavens! no," said the Marquis; "had certain perdition attended my going forward, I had not hesitated."

"Oh! that I had been with you," cried Lord John, "she should not have called in vain; but I will inform my sister of this—they must not meet."

He did so; and the words had no sooner reached her ear, than springing forward, she exclaimed—

"Dear, lost Geraldwood; I will see you—I will save you."

Her haste was such, that she had reached the lobby before her brothers could overtake her; nor could they prevail

vail on her to leave the house, until convinced that she was no longer in it; and she was no sooner placed in her carriage, than she gave vent to her feelings by a flood of tears.

On reaching her father's house, the sight of her uncle renewed her grief. She regretted he had not been with her—upbraided the Marquis, and lamented her own disappointment, until the Duke moved by her distress, bade her be comforted, and he would see if something could not be done to reclaim the poor lost girl.

Lord John's impatience at his father's neglect of Geraldwood, could no longer be restrained—he replied, with sharpness, "It was high time that his Grace should conduct himself like a father, for Geraldwood's being a natural child, would not excuse his driving her from his house, and abandoning her to infamy."

The

The eyes of the Duke, his daughter, and Doctor Mirvan, were turned with amazement on the speaker, whilst those of the Marquis and his mother, though from different motives, were cast down. Her Grace, who had for some time herself doubted the truth of what she had asserted to her sons, as not admitting any doubt, felt both afraid and ashamed of the investigation which she saw must follow. The Marquis, too, felt both afraid and ashamed; ashamed that he did not instantly second his brother, and afraid to trust his emotions on the subject.

The Duke's astonishment appeared to have tied his tongue. Doctor Mirvan asked, "For God's sake, nephew, what is it you mean?"

"That Geraldwood is my father's child; and that if he does not call this scoundrel Walton to an account, I will."

"My child," exclaimed his Grace,

"you

"you are undoubtedly mad, John; Geraldwood Orphan my child? How excessively absurd—I never met any thing equal to it. Did you, my love?"—turning to the Duchess, whose extreme confusion had not passed unremarked by her brother; who anxious to learn from whence that confusion arose, requested his nephew to explain his reason for supposing the Duke to be the father of that unfortunate girl—a girl who had been brought into the house by himself, too?

His Lordship replied, "that what he had advanced proceeded not from vague surmise or light information—that his authority had been such as left him no room to doubt the truth of what he had advanced." His uncle said "in such a case, he thought he had no right to withhold that authority from his Grace."

Lord John instantly named his mother, and her Grace's explanation immediately followed,

followed, which brought the Earl of Belmont too forward on the canvas, to suffer him to pass unnoticed; particularly on Doctor Mirvan's mind it made a deep impression—even the Duke thought it strange, and wondered what could be his motive.

Lord John, who was rejoiced, on his brother's account, that Geraldwood was not his sister, seemed to forget every thing else, even the supposed depravity of his favourite. What were the feelings of the Marquis, it would be difficult to describe. One moment his heart throbbed with ecstasy at the certainty of her not being his sister—at the next, it bled with anguish at the recollection of her being his wife—and Lady Georgina felt disappointed in the relationship not being proved.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIII.

WE must now return to the luckless Jane, who was left a prey to the most soul-harrowing hopes and fears; and who, on the Countess's rejoining her, appeared upon the point of being speedily released from both. Excessively shocked, she endeavoured to reanimate her fainting spirits—she spoke to her of the beauty, the elegance, the virtues of her new-found duughter—of the happiness they would know together. The sufferer despairingly shook he rhead—the Countess insisted it should be so—repeated the praises of Geraldwood, and again talked of happiness. It was a sound the ear of her

her friend had been long unused to; it at length, became familiar, and she listened with a sensation of fearful pleasure.

Encouraged by the positive promises of the Countess, she once more wished to live, and as far as nature would admit, drove from her mind, those recollections which had long destroyed her peace. In this comparatively happy situation, the Countess left her to the care of her excellent nurse, Lady Felix: who had already provided cordials and possets sufficient for an hospital of patients, and repaired to the Earl, whom she found on the point of setting off for town. Far from convinced of his past innocence respecting our heroine, or present good intentions towards her, she solemnly assured him, that his quitting that house should be the signal for her laying all that she knew, and all that she suspected, relative to him and his grand-daughter, before the Lord

Chancellor.

Chancellor. She further declared her determination to employ every power she possessed for the discovery of Geraldwood.

The Earl, thrown off his guard, said, her success would prove her own ruin, as well as his—the daughter of Lady Jane once reinstated in her rights, drove him a bankrupt from society; it was, therefore necessary for the preservation of both, that he immediately took such steps as could alone insure to her pleasure, and to him safety; and that she should descend from her stilts, or at least only mount them when she wished to impose on the credulous.

The Countess felt a sense of humiliation at this speech, before unknown to her—her husband had discovered to her, that he thought so meanly of her principles, as to deem her capable of becoming an accessary in depriving a parent of her

 child,

child, and plunging that child into friendless poverty, while she rioted in her unjustly obtained possessions. A moment's consultation with her heart, restored her pride—it told her, she was injured—that her soul shrunk from acts of so much baseness.

Drawing up her head with a smile of self-gratulation, she fervently exclaimed, "My God! I thank you, that I am not what this man believes me. Infamous Lord Belmont, you have this day opened my eyes. I no longer wonder at the persecutions of your hapless grand-child—every thing is plain to me, and shall be so to others."

He perceived his error, and would have retracted, but she had left the room; and repairing to her closet, instantly began a letter to Mr. Fitzroy, the contents of which were these:

"The

"The daughter of your once idolized "Jane, has this day been discovered to "be in existence; and wonderful to tell, "is known to me. You cannot but have "heard of the late protegée of the Du- "chess of M——, that lovely girl, and "the daughter of our ill-fated friend are "the same person. I cannot enter into "particulars; suffice it to say, there is "not a doubt of this fact; yet, as if fate "were not weary of rending the already "lacerated heart of our deeply suffering "Jane, the comfort of seeing her child, "is denied her, at least, the prospect is "distant, and indeed so uncertain, that "I am fearful her constitution will sink "under the anguish of hope deferred.

"Geraldwood Orphan, the name given "her by the man who received her from "her mother, has, like that mother, been "the object of persecution, and a martyr "to villainy. She has been abandoned by

" that epitome of all the Christian virtues, " her Grace of M——, to friendless po- " verty, because one of her sons had dis- " cerned that she was lovely. She has, " by another foe of equal feeling, been " exposed to hardships of no common na- " ture; and is now, if she is at liberty, " driven to earn her bread by the labour " of her hands; for which purpose she " was, six weeks since pursuing the road " to London, when she was separated " from the only friend her persecutors " had left her, by his being seized by the " officers of justice. Since which we can " learn nothing respecting her; but this " man supposes, that if left to her own " choice, she continued her intention of " going to town, where by advertising in " every news-paper—inquiring at all shops " where young women are employed, with " every other method your judgment shall " dictate, you must endeavour to discover,

" an

"and that done, conduct her to the arms "of her mother.

"I need not, to you, urge either diligence or dispatch: as in an act of humanity, I know you would use both, "even for a stranger. Should you not "shortly succeed, I shall be confirmed in "my fears of her being deprived of her "liberty, and will hasten to consult you "on the propriety of securing the person "of her oppressor, whose name it is my "wish to conceal, even from you; but "which, if justice to Miss Orphan requires it, *shall be published* to the astonished world.

"S. BELMONT."

After the conversation which we have related at the Duke of M——'s, Doctor Mirvan retired, deeply ruminating on the part which the Earl of Belmont had taken respecting Geraldwood. He now recalled

 what

what had passed in his visit to the Countess, which tended to confirm his idea, that his Lordship was the enemy of this unfortunate girl, though from what possible motive, was beyond his conjecture.

The certainty of her having a powerful enemy, led him to reflect, that it was more than ever necessary she should have an active friend; and the next morning he bent his course to the house of Mr. Walton, inquiring for Miss Orphan.

The footman assured him, that no lady of that name lived there.

Thinking it possible she went by some other, he put a guinea into the man's hand, frankly telling him, there was a young woman with whom he wished much to converse for a few minutes; and who, he understood, was under the protection of his master.

The servant confessed there was a lady of that description in the house, to whom he

he could, without any difficulty, conduct him, as she was very easy of access.

Deeply sighing at this insinuation of her worthlessness, he followed to a room, where sat a young and beautiful female, but to his infinite relief, not her he sought.

At no time remarkable for gallantry, he apologized aukwardly enough for his intrusion, by saying, "She was not the person whom he wanted," and he withdrew, followed by a loud laugh from the lady.

As he passed through the hall, he was met by Lord John Walsingham, who came from another apartment, evidently much disturbed. He informed his uncle, he had been to demand satisfaction from Walton, for the injury done to Geraldwood—that he had denied any knowledge of her—ridiculed his anxiety, and finally refused to meet him, or encourage his Quixotism, on account of any such low-born jilt,

whom he would probably find with Delville, or half a score of other of his friends. Doctor Mirvan then related how his attempt had succeeded, and declared his belief, that the Marquis of L—— had been mistaken.

Lord John knew not what to think, yet could not agree in the supposition of his brother's mistaking either the person of Geraldwood, or Walton.

In this uncertainty they returned home, in order to question him more particularly; but the presence of some strangers prevented any communication until the next day, when they sought him for that purpose. Before they had time to propose their questions, a letter was delivered him, with an intimation that the bearer waited. Casting his eye over it, the Duchess being present, he gave it in silence to his brother, who read:—

"If

"If the Marquis of L—— is not en-
"tirely lost to every sense of honour and
"humanity; or if he has any regard for
"his future peace, he will follow the
"bearer—the shortest delay may prove
"fatal.

"DELVILLE."

The Marquis left the room. Lord John taking the arm of his uncle, followed; and we will take this opportunity to return to our heroine whom we left in Mr. Delville's carriage.

Having learned her direction, he accompanied her home. The situation in which he had found her, with the report of the by-standers, left no douht upon his mind of her present unhappy course of life. His heart bled, while it unwillingly assented to this belief; and in the bitterness of his soul, he cursed the monster who had plunged in guilt and infamy, a

 being

being intended by nature to adorn society, and constitute the happiness of a man of honour and understanding.

The meanness, yet appearance of regularity and neatness in the house in which she inhabited, somewhat surprized him. Her own dress, plain, unexpensive, and simple, so unlike those of her profession, next caught his attention. The decent manners of the hostess—the joy she expressed at the return of her lodger, and sorrow for her illness, all served to perplex him.

After paying him her grateful thanks, Geraldwood wished him a good night; and requested to be assisted to her room, "feeling herself," she said, "extremely ill."

Fearful of giving offence, he withdrew; but as early the next day, as propriety would admit, he returned, and finding Mrs. Cradock in much affliction, inquired the

the cause; and was informed, that her lodger had been in a high fever during the night, and was, she conceived, in the utmost danger.

Exceedingly alarmed, he inquired if she had any advice; and was told an apothecary had been just sent for, and was expected every moment. As she spoke, he entered, and Mr. Delville waited his return from the sick chamber, when he, with expressions of concern, informed him, that he thought the symptoms of the patient were truly alarming—that her fever was excessive; and unless some speedy alteration took place, of which at present he saw no prospect, a very few hours would decide the contest. At all events, he thought, if the young woman had any friends, they ought to be apprized of her danger; and indeed he could wish some better advice might be called in. He was now taking his leave, but Mr. Delville

Delville insisted on his not quitting the house, until the arrival of the physician; for whom he instantly sent.

To Delville, this was a day of dreadful anxiety.

No hopes were entertained of the recovery of her, whose life to preserve, he would have shortened his own.

He remained in the house until midnight, and then retired with a heart trembling at the thought of what might be the situation of the now suffering Geraldwood, ere he returned. With the day he renewed his attendance. Mrs. Cradock informed him, she had been more composed, and was now asleep—that she had certainly been very delirious; for she had talked of lords and duchesses, and said, a lord had ruined her.

Delville's brain was on fire—he imprecated eternal curses on the villain's head. The good woman affrighted at his execrations,

tions, and half offended at his believing Geraldwood had spoke the truth, said, "She wondered he could be so wicked, as to curse any body so for nothing; for as to poor Miss Orphan's being ruined, it was all madness—she was no more ruined, than she was herself; for, in her opinion, there was not a more virtuous young woman in the whole world, than she was."

This led Delville to inquire how her acquaintance with her lodger had commenced; and he received a very full detail of every circumstance respecting Geraldwood, with which Mrs. Cradock was herself acquainted. In this, the business at the play-house was elucidated, and Delville convinced he had greatly injured the object of his fondest regards.

A summons from the sick room, had called away his companion, who shortly returned, saying, that having told Miss Orphan, whom she had found quite

calm,

calm, and composed, of his great kindness and attention yesterday—and that he was now in the house—she had requested to see him. Elated with hope, he followed to her apartment ; but the sight of her altered visage, where death seemed to reign triumphant, checked every fond expectation, and again filled his bosom with despair.

She held out her hand at his approach, and feebly, but gratefully thanked him for his humanity, on which she meant still further to impose. She said, that she was sensible some parts of her conduct had at least worn an air of mystery, which could not but leave an ill impression upon the minds of those whose good opinion was most precious to her—that in the hope her future life might justify her, she had suffered them to remain in ignorance of the motives which had influenced her to forfeit their esteem : but now that

prospect

prospect was shut out, she felt the most extreme anxiety to clear her fame, and though she could not leave a spotless name behind her, because one act had stamped it with ingratitude to the most generous of benefactors, she trusted she could, with his assistance, clear it from every other aspersion. He entreated she would command him; as to dedicate his life and fortune to her service, would to him be the highest felicity.

She proceeded: "I am grateful to Providence, Mr. Delville, that has sent me such a friend in the hour of my distress. Your means I know are great—your charity still greater. I will not therefore scruple to confess, that I am in poverty, and that without your assistance, I must recompence the infinite goodness of my present landlady, by involving her in expences which she cannot afford. I therefore, make it my request, that you will

will enable her to perform the last offices I shall require, without injury to herself; and when I am in the grave——"

"Speak not of the grave," he exclaimed, sinking on his knees, "I cannot bear it—live, my long, my ever-loved Geraldwood, live for Delville—drive him not to despair, accept a heart which has never ceased to mourn your rejection; and suffer him to dedicate a life to you, which, must otherwise be a burthen to its possessor."

Inexpressibly affected, she pressed his hand for some time in silence—at length she said, "My generous friend, had my destiny united me to you, I had been blessed; but fate forbade. At the time I refused your offered hand, I was a wife." Without noticing Delville's surprize, she continued; "Yes, the contemned, unacknowledged wife of the Marquis of L——." She then related her hasty

hasty and private marriage, with every other material circumstance which had occurred from the evening of their separation, to that of their late meeting at the play-house; at the same time requesting him to explain her conduct to the Countess and Dr. Mirvan.

He had listened with the deepest attention to the recital of unmerited distresses, which at once incensed and shocked him. When she had ceased speaking, he told her, that keenly as he felt the impossibility of her ever being his, this was not a time to yield to selfish repinings. He therefore entreated she would inform him, if she had any idea whence her persecutions had arisen, as they appeared to him to have followed each other too systematically to have been the effect of chance, or even of a common contriver.

After a short silence, she replied, "My physician, Mr. Delville, entertains but small

small hopes of my recovery, and I feel something here, pressing her hand upon her heart, which confirms his opinion; therefore, at a moment like this, I cannot tell a falsehood; yet to confess my suspicions, wounds every feeling of my soul, for in so doing I must name the man who still twines himself about my heart—who in the agonies of death will be dear to me."—She paused, while tears of unutterable anguish fell from her eyes.

"It is the Marquis," cried Delville, "yes, it is from him your wrongs proceed."

She interrupted him. "You have guessed my thoughts; and it is some consolation in my deep distress to know, that my life has been too unoffending to render it difficult to guess my enemies. I am a friendless being, of consequence to none, save him—his views I might have blasted, to prevent which, he has crushed

me.—

me.—Poor Marquis! I would have freely given my life to have secured your peace. Oh! that I might be assured my death would now obtain it!"

"Curse on the monster," exclaimed Mr. Delville; "may peace henceforth be a stranger to his bosom."

She, with enthusiasm, interrupted him. "May he be happy—may angels guard his pillow—may no sense of his own unkindness, or knowledge of my sorrow, ever disturb his repose! Oh! my friend, do not add to my affliction.—To think him false—to know myself the object of his scorn, is agony enough. Long have I struggled to deceive myself—his silence I imputed not to him; and but for that fatal meeting, I had still believed him guiltless—yet in all this time, would he not have found me? He knew, yes, he must have known, why I was banished from his parents' house, abandoned and degraded,

yet he was in England, and he sought me not; and when chance conducted me to him, he fled me, with scorn he fled me. Oh! that moment, Mr. Delville, that cruel moment, rent my heart in twain. But I distress you, Sir, and I am very ill myself—leave me, I beseech you."

He retired, and dispatched the note which we have seen to the Marquis, who attended by his uncle and his brother, instantly obeyed the summons, greatly offended by the contents, and much wondering what could be the nature of the business, which so urgently demanded his presence. Both these gentlemen took the opportunity of acquainting the Marquis with their visit to Mr. Walton, and the result; to which he only replied, "It is impossible—I could not be deceived."

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

SHORTLY after Mr. Delville had left the room of Geraldwood, she sunk into a heavy sleep, from which it was the opinion of those about her, she would never awake. He was waiting the event in a state of awful expectation, when he was informed that the Marquis of L—— desired to see him. With an indignant look he returned the haughty bow of the Marquis, who said:—

"I know not, Sir, whether my ready attendance will remove the doubt which is implied in your note; but I must insist on knowing whence that doubt originated."

To

To this, Mr. Delville replied, "Was there a doubt implied? I can assure you none was meant—my mind was quite made up on the subject of your Lordship's principles."

"May I crave to know the decision," returned the Marquis, sneeringly—

"Most readily; they merit the abhorrence of every honest man."

The Marquis darted forward.

Doctor Mirvan interfered.

Delville with his arms crossed upon his breast, remained unmoved; looking defiance.

Doctor Mirvan having calmed his nephew, expressed his astonishment that Mr. Delville should so far forget what was due both to the Marquis of L——'s character, and his own, as to accuse and condemn him without even informing him what were his supposed crimes.

To

To which Delville replied, "He does not need my information, Doctor Mirvan, he is well aware that he is a monster; but if he chooses occular demonstration, let him follow me;" and he led the way to the room of Geraldwood, who still slept; but it appeared so like the sleep of death, that even himself was deceived.

To do justice to this scene is impossible. The Marquis remained fixed to the spot whence he had first beheld her—every faculty seemed suspended, the angry redness of his countenance was turned to a deadly pale, and his eyes, though intently fixed, looked on nothing; while Lord John, hurrying to the side of the bed, burst into lamentations, kissing and bedewing the hand of his early favourite with his tears.

Doctor Mirvan, too, had approached the bed—his naturally placid visage was overspread with the deepest sorrow, as he gazed on

on the altered face of his late beautiful, but now apparently dying inmate; for he perceived that she was not yet dead. A tear stole down his manly cheek, as he turned with a look of inquiry to the physician who was present, and who only answered by an unfavourable shake of his head. Delville, whose gratified revenge gave him the air of a victor, completed a group, whose feelings, though nearly in unison, were variously expressed.

Doctor Mirvan, regaining his recollection, led the Marquis from a scene, the surprize and horror of which had perfectly benumbed his senses. Lord John had, on the discovery that Geraldwood still lived, precipitately left the house; and Mr. Delville soon after descending to the parlour, found the Marquis alone, his uncle having returned to the bed-side of the patient, there to wait the event of her

her waking, which he was convinced would prove decisive; but whether for life or death, he greatly doubted.

The haughty and triumphant looks of Mr. Delville, increased the perturbation of his Lordship's already irritated temper; and he demanded satisfaction for the insults he had received. The demand was readily complied with, and they separated for the present.

At the time appointed, they met; and it falling to the lot of Delville to fire first, he discharged his pistol; and missing his antagonist, the Marquis presented his, but instantly dropped his arm, saying, with great emotion:

"I cannot hurt the protector of Geraldwood—she has been false to me; yet I must respect him who has proved himself her friend."

"Do not," returned Mr. Delville, "add falsehood and injustice to treachery

 and

and inhumanity. She false to you; she is pure and unspotted—your own image is the only base object her heart has entertained; and there, in spite of your perfidy, you reign triumphant."

"Do not, Delville," replied the Marquis, "insult a fallen man; for, if what you now say be true, I am fallen where earthly happiness can never reach me—do not say that Geraldwood is innocent; for terrible as have been my sufferings from her guilt, her innocence would cost me more."

"Were your life to pay the forfeit," said his antagonist, "I should not hesitate to proclaim her the most virtuous and most perfect of women. Could I think that you really believed her otherwise, I should pity, and would endeavour to undeceive you; but you cannot. Her life has been blameless; she has borne the cruelty of your family, and your

own

own persecutions, without even a murmur."

"My persecutions," interrupted the Marquis. "I have, indeed, been led by the conviction of her infidelity to abandon and despise her; but as to persecuting, Heaven knows my heart, and well it knows, that to have gained a world, it would not have injured her."

Delville felt persuaded; yet who could have been the foe of Geraldwood? Perplexed and divided between the fear of wronging the husband, or neglecting the cause of the wife—he entered into a minute detail of all he had heard from the latter; and from the answers of the Marquis, soon became convinced how greatly the former had been injured by both himself and Geraldwood.

Perfectly convinced as was the Marquis of the injustice which his lovely and suffering

suffering wife had experienced, they returned in perfect friendship to Mrs. Cradock's, where they were informed, that Lord John had been some time returned, accompanied by his sister, Lady Georgina; and that Geraldwood still remained, as they had left her, in a deep sleep. The Marquis sent up a request to see his uncle and sister; and immediately, on their appearing, declared himself the husband of Geraldwood, acknowledging the wrong he had done her, and his perfect conviction of her worth and innocence.

To them both, this was matter of surprize. Dr. Mirvan had long, indeed, suspected their attachment to each other; and for this reason, had forborn to converse with our heroine on any part of his sister's family, well knowing, from the haughty temper of the Duchess, that nothing but the most violent opposition was to be expected. Of a marriage having

taken,

taken, or being likely to take place, he had never entertained any suspicion. To Lady Georgina, the whole was new and wonderful; she never having had an idea of any thing more than a friendly regard on either side; and latterly, her brother's silence in the defence of her friend, and passive sanction of every thing alleged against her, had led her to imagine, that Geraldwood was rather the object of his hate than of his love.

As her surprize at this intelligence abated, so did the joy which she had experienced—the recollection, that in all human probability, a few hours would deprive her of her new-found relation, filled her heart with sorrow, and her eyes with tears. Beholding her brother as the cause, she turned coldly from him, saying, "How unfortunate it was, that my poor friend did not marry you, Mr. Delville, she would then have been happy—not

driven to perish in a garret, with a broken heart." The Marquis conjured her to spare him; but with a look of reproach, she continued—" My too late acknowledged sister, *I* will return to you, *I* at least will not neglect you."

Here Mrs. Cradock entered with intelligence, that Geraldwood's sleep had for some moments past appeared disturbed; and that it was concluded, she was on the point to wake, or sleep for ever.

Lady Georgina, with a throbbing heart, hurried to the apartment—her friend's eyes were open, but their sense was still shut. After some time, she drew a deep sigh, and again they closed; when Lady Georgina supposing this was the final close, uttered a piercing shriek, and fainted on the bosom of her uncle.

The Marquis, whom the words of Mrs. Cradock had filled with the most dreadful expectation, and whose ear the cry of his

his sister had reached, rushed into the room, at the instant when Geraldwood again opened her eyes. They were not now vacant as before; but wandered from the pallid countenance of her reviving friend, to the horror-struck form of her nearly frantic husband, during which she had either been insensible, or regardless of the physician's inquiry how she found herself; but on the question being repeated by Dr. Mirvan, she suddenly raised her head from the pillow, and fixing her eyes steadily on his face for a moment, with a smile, which bespoke unutterable happiness, sunk again upon her pillow, saying, in a voice of ecstacy, "No, it was not a dream." But instantly resuming her former position, she contemplated the face of her friend, with a look varying from certainty to doubt, until Lady Georgina, no longer capable of being restrained, clasped her in her arms, exclaiming,

claiming, "She knows me, and she will live."

At the same time the Marquis knelt at her side, calling her his injured wife—his beloved Geraldwood, and entreating she would say, that she forgave him.

For a moment she appeared so shocked and bewildered, that the medical gentlemen became greatly alarmed for her intellects; but, on the Marquis repeating his entreaties, she gave him her hand, and on his putting his arm round her, she hid her face in his bosom, and wept aloud. After some time, his Lordship was prevailed upon to retire, and leave the dearest object of his wishes to the care of his sister and Dr. Mirvan, where it not being possible to put her in better hands, we will without reluctance let her remain, while we return to the hitherto unfortunate Jane, whose mind, though harassed by impatience and uncertainty,

yet

yet was comparatively happy, since the knowledge that her child had neither perished in helpless infancy, or lived to curse the parent whose imprudence had consigned her to ignorance or infamy. Never was she weary of making her friend respeat every, even the most trifling circumstances relating to Geraldwood.

Not so, the Countess, whose heart, though feeling, benevolent, and generous, was greatly swayed by the levity of her disposition, which rendered every thing like sameness, irksome to her, and drove her again to shun the society of one, who could speak on, or listen to, one only subject. The novelty of her present situation, had for some time supplied the place of more eligible amusements, but that was past—not only the pigs, but cows, poultry, and cats, had become so many bores—even the yew-tree beaux, which guarded

guarded every avenue in the garden, with their flowing perriwigs and chapeau-bra hats, and which had infinitely delighted her, now ceased to charm, in so much, that she would have preferred the company of any one of the many acquaintances, to whom she had in her mirthful moments compared these gentlemen, to the whole phalanx—even had Oliver Cromwell, battle-axe and all, been thrown into the bargain.

The monotonous life which she led, was not to be endured, and each day was rendered less tolerable by her excessive impatience to fly to more congenial scenes; yet to leave her long-suffering friend at this crisis, was inhuman. Therefore, nothing remained for her but to increase her exertions to discover Geraldwood. To this end, she wrote the following letter to Doctor Mirvan:

"MY

"MY VERY GOOD SIR,

"Having been assured, from our last "interview, that you are not infected "with the family influenza of hatred to "that divine girl, Miss Orphan; I do "not hesitate to request you will unite "with me in the most earnest endea- "vours to discover her retreat, as it "is of the utmost consequence to me "that she should be discovered, and can "no longer be of any to her Grace of "M—— to hide her in obscurity, which "I am certain she would not have hither- "to done, had she not had every reason "to suppose her an indigent friendless "being, whom no person would have the "imprudence to patronize, seeing that "she was abandoned by a lady of such "exalted station, and so eminently con- "spicuous for the superior virtues of con- "descension and forgiveness—nor should "I, in that case, have presumed to stand

"between

" between such a person and her Grace's " chastisement; but as Miss Orphan is " proved to be the daughter of a man of " fashion, and a lady of high birth, be- " sides being actual heiress to an immense " property, I hope, I shall not be deemed " indecorous in stepping forward as her " declared friend; and, should occasion " require, her future protectress, how- " ever unfit for such an office. In the per- " formance of which, I most decidedly " feel I can never copy the great exam- " ple which her Grace has set me—an " example, which will ever be recorded " amongst the numerous proofs of her " fortitude, perseverance, and suavity of " disposition.

" But I entreat your pardon, Doctor " Mirvan, for I perceive the sublimity of " this wonderful woman's character, has " seduced me from the subject on which " I wish to be very particular. Miss

" Orphan,

"Orphan, as I have said, is proved to "be a lady of some consequence in the "world, and of course has many friends; "several of them exceedingly anxious to "snatch her from the penury, degrada-"tion, and persecution, which she has too "long endured. In her's, and their be-"half, I therefore entreat you to use your "exertions for restoring to her just rights "this greatly injured, and much abused "lady. Perhaps her Grace of M—— "may be able to direct your search, as "far as saying, where will be the most "probable place to seek her, as Lord Bel-"mont, you may tell the Duchess, dis-"claims any *late* knowledge of Miss Or-"phan's place of concealment.

"With the most perfect respect for "your character, and reliance on your "immediate assistance, I remain,

"SUSAN BELMONT."

This

This letter reached the Duke's, while the Doctor was attending on Geraldwood, whom we left restored to recollection and her dearest friends. Sorrow or care no longer had a place in her bosom; indeed, joy and rapture pervaded every breast, until Doctor Mirvan, thinking there might be too much, even of happiness, moved an adjournment for the night, not excepting Georgina, who, he said, would not only talk herself, but make the invalid talk; which, he feared, she had already done too much—quiet being positively necessary to her recovery. They, after some remonstrance on their part, were convinced; and accordingly returned home, leaving Geraldwood to the care of the apothecary and Mrs. Cradock.

The Duchess having been only informed that her daughter had gone out with her brother, was greatly alarmed by the length of their absence. The possibility that

Lord

Lord John had discovered Miss Orphan, haunted her imagination—his constant defence of, and declared affection for her, left no room to doubt what would be the result of their again meeting. Their return convinced her, that at least the supposition of Geraldwood's return, had not been erroneous, as Lady Georgina triumphantly informed her, that she had passed the day with her friend, whom she should have brought home with her, had her health permitted.

Irritated by her late alarm, and the now almost conviction of her worst fears being verified, all command over her temper forsook her—she accused her daughter of impropriety and disrespect—Lord John of meanness and breach of duty—and Geraldwood of ingratitude, duplicity, and baseness: vowed never more to hold converse with her—admit her within her doors, or live on terms of friendship

friendship with those who did. During this, Doctor Mirvan had received and perused the Countess's letter, the surprizing contents of which, he only waited for a pause in his sister's violence, to communicate.

This, a want of words adequate to her resentment, at length produced; when observing that the Marquis was on the point of making some reply, he demanded their attention, and without further prologue, read the letter; and, before any of the party had sufficiently recovered their astonishment to give vent to it in words, addressing himself to the Duchess, he said—

"My dear Ellen, it is with the deepest concern and mortification, that I perceive the degrading suspicions which are entertained respecting your conduct to that lovely, unprotected girl. That the Duchess of M—— should be in league with

with the Earl of Belmont, even to perform an act of justice or humanity, were hardly to be wished; but to unite with such a man in fraud and violence, to join with him in oppression—yet, I do him wrong, as he must be your instrument, having no motive of his own for hatred to Miss Orphan; but that you should make choice of such an instrument, a being whose heart has long been dead to every feeling—of a temper, cruel and unnatural—that you, my sister, should take counsel from him, plot and contrive with him, so vexes, so disgusts, and so distresses me, that I am tempted to regret my being your brother."

This harsh attack served but to increase her anger. She spoke contemptuously of Lady Belmont, despised her insinuations respecting herself, and ridiculed the idea of Geraldwood's birth and fortune. She was interrupted by the announcing of

Mr.

Mr. Fitzroy, who apologized for his intrusion, hoping that the urgency of his business would entitle him to her Grace's excuse. He then entreated, if she had any knowledge of the present, or late abode of Miss Orphan, she would direct him to it, as the life of her afflicted mother greatly depended on the speedy restoration of her child.

The Duchess, whose anger had been augmented by the name of our heroine, sneeringly asked, who was this impatient lady, and where she was to be found, in case her worthy daughter should be desirous of profiting by her condescension? Mr. Fitzroy, hurt by her manner, said, he must suppose, from the little feeling or respect with which her Grace had spoken, she was yet to learn, that Miss Orphan was the long-lost, and long-lamented daughter of Lady Jane Twaddle.

Any

Any attempt at mine to portray the amazement, the infinite amazement of Mr. Fitzroy's auditors, must prove unsuccessful. I shall therefore only say, that after the first shock of astonishment, for such it really proved, had subsided—the tale appeared so incredible, as to occasion them to wonder at the surprize which it had, though, but indeed for a moment, given rise to. The Duchess, conceiving that Mr. Fitzroy had been induced by the Countess, to mislead, and then render her ridiculous, arose from her seat, and with more than her usual dignity, desired he would inform his employer, that although she could not be surprized at any undertaking of her's, she was exceedingly so to find a gentleman of Mr. Fitzroy's character condescend to become either her tool, or her abettor, in so foolish a contrivance.

"Tool or abbettor!" ejaculated Fitzroy.

"Yes,

"Yes, Sir," returned her Grace, "by one of those honourable distinctions you must be known—tool or abettor."

"Of whom, Madam?"

"Of the Countess of Belmont—it was from her you came. Be candid, Sir; was she not the inventor of this pretty story?"

"It certainly was from her Ladyship I had it; but I will not injure her so greatly as to suppose her the inventor."

"Have you heard it from any other person?"

"I have not."

"That is sufficient for me; and so Mr. Fitzroy would have thought, had he reflected but one moment before he undertook the office, on the exceeding improbability of Lady Belmont's having exclusive possession of so extraordinary a secret—a secret, in the discovery of which, several of the first families in the kingdom have an interest; but particularly the husband

husband of your informer, who according to the tale of which she has made you the bearer, must be grandfather to Miss Orphan. Yet he is not acquainted with his being such; and his son, Lord Felix, must be her uncle, though likewise kept in ignorance of her existence."

Mr. Fitzroy felt the force of what she said, and could not conceal his confusion; but aukwardly repeating the apology for his intrusion, retired.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

HE had scarcely left the house, when the Earl of Belmont was announced. It had lately been the custom of her Grace to deem the Earl her visitor only; nor would the monopoly have now been disputed, had not a wish to learn if he had heard the story of Geraldwood's birth, prevented Dr. Mirvan from following his niece and nephew, who vanished at one door, as his Lordship entered at another; but he waited in vain—the Earl spoke on common topics only, and what extremely surprized him, her Grace did the same.

Dr. Mirvan was not a suspicious man, yet his heart misgave him; and he believed

his

his sister had some motive for refraining to mention Geraldwood before him, besides, it was evident, that they both wished his absence.

Resolved not to gratify them, he maintained his seat, until his patience becoming exhausted, he suddenly asked the Earl, if he had yet seen his new-found grand-daughter? Had a thunder-bolt been hurled at him from Heaven, it could not have more dismayed him, than did this question. He trembled—hesitated—looked at the Duchess—uttered a few inarticulate words; again hesitated, and again looked wistfully at her Grace, who affecting a laugh, said, "Your Lordship may well be surprized—you did not, I imagine, know that you had a grand-daughter?"

This was sufficient—he was instantly in full possession of all his powers, and joining in the laugh, said, "Upon my honour, your Grace is right—I was

 surprized,

surprized, for I did not at first recollect Doctor Mirvan was a jester."

"I believe," replied that gentleman, "your Lordship will find it less difficult to recollect your grand-daughter than any of my jests."

"Still harping on my daughter," gaily returned the Earl, "you certainly mean something—who is this fair one—where does she live—and what is her name?"

"Her name," answered Doctor Mirvan, fixing his eye on that of the inquirer, "is Geraldwood Orphan, until restored to her rightful one, and she lives, where those shall easily find her, who seek her from honest motives." For the name of Geraldwood Orphan, the Earl had by no means been prepared.

The conduct of the Duchess having thrown him off his guard, it struck on his ear like the knell of death, and deprived him of articulation. Yet, even this he

turned

turned to his advantage; for after a moment's silence, suddenly recovering himself, he repeated, "Geraldwood Orphan —I have assuredly heard that name, though I cannot recollect where."

"The girl, whom my folly protected, was so called, my Lord," said the Duchess; "it was in this house you have heard it."

"Your Grace's protegée," replied the Earl—"the little bandy-legged beggar-girl:—so it was, upon my honour; and I crave your Grace's pardon, for forgetting any one who had ever been honoured with a place near your person."

The entrance of company prevented any thing further, and Dr. Mirvan left the room, harassed with doubts, though not knowing what he suspected. The assumed ease of the Earl's manner, but ill suited the situation of his heart, which was a prey to every pang that guilt and

horror could inspire; yet the presence of the visitant was favourable, as it allowed him to arrange his thoughts. He saw that his case was desperate, and that none but desperate means could save him. On these he was not long in resolving, for the instant that the departure of the stranger permitted, he exclaimed, "Thank Heaven, we are at last alone; for, though what I have to disclose will wound the bosom of my most valued friend, yet the concealment of it would only delay the cure, without lessening the anguish."

Without waiting her reply, he proceeded thus: "I read your Grace's anxiety, and will not prolong it; we have been mistaken, Lord John is not the object of that abandoned girl's pursuit, she soars still higher—the heir of your house, the Marquis of L—— is her victim, for he is her husband—poor deluded youth, he is her husband."

Surprize,

Surprize, rage, and wounded pride, struggled in the bosom of the Duchess, convulsing her whole form, until at length words found utterance; when she cursed Geraldwood—vowed vengeance on her, and deplored the dishonour of her family in a breath; until the Earl becoming alarmed, lest the storm which he had raised should sink himself, used all his art to allay it.

He talked of averting the evil—of defeating the designs—punishing the ingratitude—but he talked in vain. Wild as the winds, and as unruly, she listened not; until weary and exhausted, she was silent from want of power to proceed. Profiting by this calm, he assured her of his friendship—repeated his hopes, and declared his readiness, could he once discover the hiding-place of this bane to her Grace's peace, to conceal her for ever from any search which might be made

after her. Encouraged by such a possibility, she became comforted, and related what she had heard from Lady Georgina.

The Earl's joy was greatly damped by finding her under such protection—still, to find her, was much, and he eagerly inquired the place of her abode; when her Grace informed him, that she had not learned it, writhing with disappointment, he had some difficulty in retaining composure sufficient to say, that he feared he only had the will without the power to serve her. It was, however, after various proposals, agreed, that her Grace should complain of illness, and retire to bed, when her daughter would undoubtedly attend her, and an opportunity might occur of inquiring where they had lodged Miss Orphan; which once obtained, her Grace might feel disposed to sleep, and for that purpose be left alone, when, writing the direction, as her dressing-

room

room fronted the square, she could with ease throw it from the window, beneath which the Earl would be ready to receive it. With many cautions, as to her over or under doing her part, he took his leave, and his precepts being of too much consequence to be neglected, were rigidly obeyed, and succeeded to his wishes.

Doctor Mirvan, previous to his meeting the family at supper, had employed himself in writing to the Countess of Belmont, acknowledging her letter—recounting the visit of Mr. Fitzroy, and the present situation of Geraldwood, with his earnest desire to know if she had been serious in what she had said respecting that young lady's birth, in which case he was ready to accompany her to Beech Grove, and lend every other assistance in his power, towards restoring her to her natural rights.

Early the following morning, but not

so early as the impatience of the Marquis and his sister wished, accompanied by Doctor Mirvan, they arrived at Mrs. Cradock's, when, to their great astonishment they were informed, that both she and Geraldwood had been absent for more than three hours, though it was not then nine o'clock. The servant could give no other information, than that her mistress had waked her soon after five, bidding her hasten to dress herself and come down, as Miss Orphan's father was dying, and had sent to desire to see her; on which account, weak as the poor young lady was, she was going to him, and her mistress with her.

Strange as this story appeared, there was no reason to disbelieve it—nothing therefore remained, but to wait in patience their return. After some time, the apothecary appeared, who likewise felt much surprized, as he had remained with

his

his patient until nearly the hour mentioned by the girl, when he left Miss Orphan in a sweet and refreshing sleep, in which state she had passed the night.

Day had now closed in, and no tidings reached them, when Mrs. Cradock rushed into the room—her looks pale and affrighted. So soon as she could collect herself, she related, that as she was shutting the door, after letting the apothecary out, a man asked her, if she could tell him whereabouts one Miss Orphan lived, as it was somewhere in that neighbourhood, but he was not certain of the number.

On her repeating "Miss Orphan," he had taken a scrap of paper from his pocket, which giving her, he said, "I thinks that bees the name, thof I bees no great scholard." She looked on the paper, and read the words, "Geraldwood Orphan, some where in —— street." Then, ask-

ing his business, told him the young lady lived in her house, but was very ill.

He replied, that was unlucky, as he was to see her himself.

Mrs. Cradock assured him, that he could not do; he might therefore as well tell his errand.

That being the case, he desired she would let the young lady know, that he had brought her a message from a man called Mark, who was dying.

Very unwillingly Mrs. Cradock disturbed her lodger to deliver this message, supposing it to be from some begging person who wanted assistance; but, at the name of Mark, Miss Orphan had betrayed the utmost agitation, saying, that he was her father, her dear, her dying father, and desired to see the messenger; who, on going up, told her that Mark lodged in his house—that he had been ill three weeks and more; but that he did not think

think of dying until yesterday, when the doctor said, there were no hopes; ever since which, he had called for his daughter to close his eyes, and pray for his poor wicked soul, which must else be damned.

At this Geraldwood started from her pillow, saying, she would go that instant; to prevent which, all that Mrs. Cradock could say, had no effect; therefore, sending the man for a coach, they had got themselves ready to accompany him—that fearful of Miss Orphan's taking cold, she had kept all the blinds up, so that they knew not to what part of the town they were carried, but concluded they were about an hour in the coach; when it stopped at a mean-looking house, and the man unlocking the door, shewed them to a small shabby parlour, and left them; but soon returning desired Miss Orphan to come alone first, as her father had something private to say to her, and he would

would fetch t'other gentlewoman, when it was over.

Having waited near two hours, Mrs. Cradock grew very impatient, and after ringing the bell several times to no purpose, attempted to open the door, but found it locked. Exceedingly alarmed, she tried the windows—they were strongly fastened, and, indeed, they only looked into a small outlet, surrounded with a high wall. She now made every kind of noise that she thought was likely to gain attention, but without effect; and the evening closing in, increased her terrors. When suddenly the man whom she had before seen, entered the room, who tying a handkerchief over her eyes, and bidding her be silent, he led her out to a coach, in which he placed her, and which set them down at some distance from her own house, to the door of which the man conducted her.

The consternation of the friends at this intelligence, is easier to be imagined than described. Their consultation had been joined by Mr. Delville, who coming to inquire after the health of Geraldwood, had waited until the return of Mrs. Cradock—but in vain did they consult, conjecture, or deliberate—all was dark as the grave.

In this state Mr. Delville left them, and they returned home, where they found the Duchess so much worse as to have recourse to a physician, after having in vain sought for Dr. Mirvan in every place where it was likely to find him. On being made acquainted with this, he went instantly to her bed-side, but finding orders had been given to have her kept very quiet, he shortly retired; and writing a second letter to the Countess of Belmont, containing an account of the incomprehensible, but fearful loss of Geraldwood, dispatched

dispatched it by a special messenger, entreating her to afford him any light in her power to guide him in his researches.

This having finished, he repaired to Mr. Walton's, but that gentleman was from home, and not expected to return for some days. To what part of the country he was gone, none of his people could tell—all they seemed to know, was, that he had gone very suddenly.

Dr. Mirvan's suspicions had from the first fallen on Mr. Walton, as the contriver of this diabolical scheme, probably from the difficulty of fixing upon any other person: be this as it may, they were now greatly strengthened, if not entirely confirmed. Yet he saw no advantage likely to accrue even from the certainty of her being in his power, ignorant as he was in what part of the kingdom to pursue him.

In his return, he met the Earl of Belmont,

mont, who expressed much surprize and concern at his account of the Duchess's illness, of which he said, he had not before heard. After lamenting, for some time, the unhappy dissipation of his son, Lord Felix, for some part of whose misconduct he seemed to upbraid himself, he wished the doctor a good night, leaving him impressed with more favourable sentiments of his heart, than he had long entertained.

On his reaching the Duke's, he inquired for his nephews, but they were both absent.

The following day, her Grace was somewhat better, though still very ill—another came, and no tidings of their unfortunate friend. The sorrows of the nearly frantic Marquis, wrung the bosoms of his deeply sympathizing relations—that is, of his brother, sister, and uncle, for his

his mother was too much an invalid to hear of them, and his father too deeply occupied in politics, to observe them.

Thus were they situated when the messenger returned from the Countess. On breaking the seal, the doctor read as follows:

" If you wish to preserve the life of the
" ill-fated Lady Jane, and her persecuted
" daughter, Geraldwood Orphan is that
" daughter, lose not a moment in securing
" the person of Lord Belmont. Neglect
" this, and your friendship in every other
" way will be fruitless. He knows Miss
" Orphan to be his grand-daughter—he
" has long known it—that knowledge
" alone has made him her enemy. He is
" a powerful one, and urged by powerful
" motives. I know him well—her life is
" not safe—charge him at once with se-
" creting

"creting an heiress—do not fear proving
"your charge.

"S. BELMONT."

The noble heart of Doctor Mirvan felt a pang of exquisite acuteness for the degradation which human nature must sustain, should such unheard-of depravity be proved; and he breathed a fervent wish, that the Countess's suspicions might be found to originate in error; he nevertheless resolved on seeing the Earl, for which purpose he went to his house; but his Lordship had that morning left town for Beech Grove. Doctor Mirvan, as soon as a post-chaise could be procured, took the same road, nor stopped, but while the horses were changing, until he reached the residence of Lady Felix, when on sending up his name, he was instantly conducted to the Countess, from whom he learned, that the Earl had arrived about

an hour before him—that her Ladyship had only seen him a few moments, and those in the presence of Lady Felix, who had pestered him the whole time with inquiries how Ned went on—whether his madam was with him—if Joey got drunk as often as usual—and if Lunnun was as dirty as ever, which had prevented her from asking a single question; consequently Geraldwood had not been mentioned. She added, that he was retired to dress, which being a work of time, they ran no hazard of interruption. She would therefore acquaint him with her reasons for supposing him the persecutor of Miss Orphan.

To these Doctor Mirvan listened with the most profound attention, and at the conclusion, protested they had not left a doubt upon his mind; at the same time, lamenting that they were such as would not warrant the taking any effectual steps

to

to recover the injured girl, or even punish the wrongs she had sustained.

"Then your laws," replied the Countess, "are a romance—mere tales to beguile idiots. Is this the boasted freedom of Britain, when one of its members may be oppressed with impunity? I repeat, Sir, that I know Lord Belmont—the life of his prisoner is not safe—his affairs are desperate—his mind is more so."

Doctor Mirvan was greatly affected. After considering for some time, he said, "She is lost—I have not the power to save her."

"Then, I have," returned her Ladyship, "and I will use it. Mark me, good Sir—I wished not to appear as the accuser of this man—it is unnatural; but I am compelled, and longer to deliberate were infamous."

With these words she left the room, and entering that of her Lord, without

waiting

waiting the departure of his valet, threw herself on a chair, saying in a voice of horror, "Is it come to this, Lord Belmont?"

The Earl, whose conscience was ever awake, bidding his servant withdraw, inquired the cause of her intrusion.

To which she replied, "The officers of justice are arrived, they demand the murderer of Miss Orphan."

The trembling culprit sunk on a seat, faintly articulating, "She is not murdered."

"Resign her then," exclaimed the Countess; "be speedy, Lord Belmont; say where she is, and save yourself from infamy."

"She is safe," returned the Earl; "I will resign her."

Running to the door, she loudly desired Doctor Mirvan to be brought thither. On his entering, she said, "Miss Orphan is in

in safety, Sir; Lord Belmont will give her into your hands;" and leaving them together, went to recover her exhausted spirits.

The doctor was too great a novice at hypocrisy, and the Earl too quick-sighted, not to perceive that he was less acquainted with his guilt, than the Countess had led him to suppose; therefore, exchanging his real confusion for an air of affected perplexity, he without hesitation inquired, what he was to understand from this very extraordinary conduct? Why he was supposed to have any knowledge of this girl, in whom he, Doctor Mirvan, appeared so deeply interested? Gaining courage as he proceeded, he bade him be assured, that ignorant at present of all which related to her, he would better inform himself, before she was thrust into his family, to gratify either the whims of a mad

a mad woman, or the designs of artful people.

Without allowing time for a reply, he left the apartment, with the manner of a man who felt himself greatly insulted; and going to that of his Lady, threw himself upon his knees before her, confessing that it was in her power to save or destroy him, as the discovery of his conduct to Geraldwood, which he vowed never to out-live, must sink him to the depths of infamy. She, he protested, was well, and contented with her situation; he, therefore, entreated that his errors might be concealed—errors, which nothing but his unbounded affection for herself could have induced him to commit. He said, that he had long balanced between the injustice of depriving his grand-daughter of her rights, and the horror of seeing the woman, on whom his soul doated, plunged in poverty, and exiled from a world

which

which she was born to adorn—that fondness prevailing, he had yielded to its influence, and stained his honour, and burthened his conscience, to a degree which must ever deprive him of content—that it remained with her to augment his sufferings by the bitter reflection, that she, for whose sake he had erred, should inflict the penalty of his offences; and again he besought her to spare him, nor compel him to seek a shelter from disgrace and penury in the grave.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

SURPRIZE, pity, and contempt, had prevented the Countess from interrupting him; and he for some time ceased to speak, before she had sufficiently mastered her feelings to reply, until attracted by his position, for he was still kneeling, her ill-smothered contempt returned, and she bade him rise from a situation which degraded *him*, and disgusted *her*. Her countenance flushing with indignation, she said, "Poor man, I pity you—you are fallen, indeed; yet how to save or assist you, I know not; for at the expence of your grand-daughter it cannot be; yet Lord Belmont, God, who knows my heart,

knows with what reluctance I stand forward as your accuser. Spare me the ungrateful, the unnatural task; be honest, and as far as possible, tread back those paths which lead to certain ruin—dry the tears of your wretched daughter by restoring to her, her child—throw yourself on their mercy, they will not sink you—do it instantly, and all may yet be well. But proceed one step further in your plan of iniquity, and you perish: through me you perish—I can no longer be a looker-on—already do I feel an accusing spirit within my bosom upbraiding my delay."

He entreated her to leave him to his reflections for the present, which she did; and rejoining Doctor Mirvan, related all that had passed, both before and since he had seen the unhappy man. "But, she continued, I *must* drop this horrid subject, or I shall be only fit to compose dirges, and sing them at funerals. In

 faith,

faith, I am strangely altered, my good Doctor—instead of feeling for no creature's cares but my own, and scarcely for them, I am become a dealer in those articles—a very monopolizer of grievances—first I meddled with Jane's—next with Geraldwood's, and now I have engaged with those of this notable Earl. God help me! for I must be in a strange way, indeed, when I take up his troubles. I very much fear I shall become a good sort of woman, at last, for my heart of late has certainly grown excessively tender, and most amiably disposed; yes, Doctor, I shall become a good sort of woman."

Doctor Mirvan laughing, said, "By that dismal expression of countenance, and melancholy shake of the head, your Ladyship appears rather to deplore than invite this new title; but be not alarmed, you have much to do, and more to undo, before letters patent will be granted you to

to use it; and as for your heart having lately grown amiable or tender, I think it is a mistake, for I am greatly deceived if it was not always so."

"Dear Sir," interrupted the Countess, "how you talk—have I not been a vain, trifling, good-for-nothing being, the whole of my life?"

"There I shall not dispute with you," he replied; "yet there are people, amongst whom I acknowledge myself to be one, who have lately had the presumption to suppose you too often submitted your heart to the guidance of others."

"Then you believe me to be a weak creature. Pray, good Sir, restore me to your former opinion, and suppose me wicked—any thing is preferable to being thought a fool."

"There, Lady Belmont, I cannot agree with you; but for the present, I will believe you to be neither; yet I will

suppose that bad company and example, like bad air and improper food (to speak professionally) may for a time disorder and enervate the mind, which wholesome conversation, and rectitude of manners, will again invigorate and restore."

Her Ladyship, shaking her head thoughtfully, said, "I perceive that you give the credit of my reformation to good people; but, in justice to the vicious part of mankind, I must deny it; for, in truth, I cannot recollect any profit I have ever derived from the society of my blameless acquaintance. No; the very few virtues which I possess, were acquired from a different channel."

"Your Ladyship excites my curiosity to know who were the teachers, and what the virtues which they taught?"

"From Sir Harry Faulkner, I learned honour and gratitude—from the Earl of Belmont, honesty and truth."

Doctor

Doctor Mirvan smiled.

"You may smile, Sir; but it is no falsehood."

"Far be it from me to deem it one; it would be presumption in me, knowing the school, to doubt the scholar."

"Now you sneer, but I will prove what I have said. Amongst my particular acquaintance, I do not at present recollect but three of those blameless people of whom I spoke. Her Grace of M—— (bowing to Doctor Mirvan)—Lady Jane Twaddle, and Lady Felix: unexceptionable characters, I presume."

"Granted," said the Doctor.

"Well, Sir; the virtues with which these ladies abound, have rendered one so insolent—another so unhappy—and a third so ridiculous—that, in contemplating their separate merits, I, instead of admiring, hate the first—tremble at the second—and laugh at the last."

"So far," said Doctor Mirvan, "you have convinced me, that the practisers of virtue may render it unamiable; I am yet to learn, how the slaves of vice can succeed in teaching a science, of which they themselves are ignorant."

"By making that in which they do excel, detestable," returned her Ladyship; "if my first party failed in making virtue lovely—my second was more successful in making vice disgusting. I have said, that from Sir Harry Faulkner I learned honour and gratitude, and thus I prove it: by the most indefatigable industry he gained an interest in my heart; indeed, he had reason to believe himself the master of its movements, and that its future peace remained with him. Hitherto the most in cautiousman in life, he now grew prudent—talked of character—dreaded the opinion of the world—the curiosity of neighbours—the talking of

servants—

servants—in short, he became so sensitive, so alive to every breath of scandal, as to render the visits he made me more like a penalty inflicted, than a gratification received. Those, indeed, daily became less frequent, and of shorter duration; as an excuse for which, multiplicity of avocations was pleaded. I fretted sadly, full as much, I verily believe, for the disappointment I fancied he must endure, as for that which I really felt torturing my own bosom. Fortunately, chance discovered to me, that a report had reached him of the derangement of the Earl's affairs, in which it was said, my father's were involved; and I of course should want more than a nominal friend; and as he knew I would readily have parted with my life to serve him, he thought I should probably expect him to be that friend."

"No unreasonable expectation," observed Doctor Mirvan.

"But not the less inconvenient," returned the Countess; "and much easier avoided before my distresses had actually overwhelmed me, than after; for which purpose he had adopted his present plan of withdrawing himself by degrees, until he had reached the distance of a common acquaintance, which would enable him, like them, to express his pity for my disasters, and his hopes that my friends would take care of me."

"Impossible," cried the indignant auditor, "no man could be so base. How did you conduct yourself on such a discovery?"

"Not as you expect, my good Sir. I neither railed at fate, nor execrated fortune; but sat down seriously to examine the cause of such untoward effects, and, upon the strictest scrutiny, I found that the whole blame rested with myself—that the man, whom my mistaken imagination had

had clothed in the robe of infallibility—whom my want of judgment had decked with honour, gratitude, and ardent love, was cold, selfish, and ungrateful—that he had acted in character, and that I was to thank my own folly which had worshipped an idol, which I myself had dignified with the attributes of a divinity, and then wondered at his want of power to bless me. The conviction of my mistake so far advanced my cure, as to lead me to feel contempt for the disease from which I had suffered such extreme pain. I felt ashamed at a weakness for which I could not find an excuse, neither the outward nor the inward man bearing any resemblance to the one whom my heart had so long cherished. His fancied graces hourly faded from my mind—even his countenance partook of his defects. Dreading to become ugly, I hastened to disencumber myself of every feeling that

might give to my features the expression of his. Alas! I found it was impossible; for it would have had the same effect, as, on withdrawing the ill-supported characters of a London masquerade, nothing is left but empty space, which there was no probability of ever seeing better filled. I therefore contented myself with fixing on his most conspicuous failings, amongst which, want of honour and gratitude pressed so forward in the group, and appeared so much like ringleaders, that I, without hesitation, drove them from my territories, not without a hope that their satellites would follow, when they were once convinced I was resolute; and thus I continued to receive instruction from my ci-devant friend, though I ceased to acknowledge him as my master; nor does he, I believe, suspect that I owe him so much good, as we have never entered into any explanation of our altered conduct

to

to each other. I, satisfying myself with the certainty, that knowing him better than others do, I think of him worse than others can; he, congratulating himself on having escaped from the neighbourhood of a falling house, and, I believe, still supposing that I am the love-lorn Delia, and he the invincible knight, whose peerless perfections I have retired to Beech-Grove to mourn the loss of; and thus ends my history of my accidental entrance into the service of honour and gratitude."

"Accidental, indeed," said Doctor Mirvan; "for, permit me, Madam, to ask, had Sir Harry Faulkner been less selfishly prudent, or more artful in his conduct, what would have been your Ladyship's?"

After a moment's consultation with herself, she replied, "The world would this day have been without the beautiful example which my conversion has set, of the

the returning prodigal of modern times; for I am nearly certain, that if this ingrate would have continued to guide me, I should have followed wherever he chose to lead—yes, I would have attended him in poverty or exile—watched over him in sickness—lived with him for his pleasure—or for ever separated from him for his good. Encouraged by him, I could have resigned all hope of happiness here, and all claim to it hereafter—I could——but enough of this," pressing her hand upon her forehead, while her countenance betrayed how greatly she was affected.

At length assuming a smile, she said, "But, dear Doctor, I have only accounted for two of my virtues; now, lest you should doubt my having any more, I must tell you how I came by them. Finding I had been mistaken in the virtues of my lover, I doubted whether I might not have been as much so in the

vices

vices of my husband, of whom, to speak the truth, I thought but indifferently. To satisfy these doubts, and with a positive determination to do him justice, I set about studying his character. Here each observation convinced me that I had erred on the side of mercy. I saw that his heart was the repository of fraud, and his tongue the dispenser of falsehood. I moreover saw, that his eagerness to reach the haven of his wishes, led him through such crooked paths, in which there were so many windings and turnings, all beset with thorns and briars—here a precipice gaping to receive him—there a rock threatening to crush him; insomuch, that, although the distance through the straight road was somewhat greater, yet the evenness of the way would, in all probability, have led him sooner to the end of his journey, and even if he became weary of travelling, or disappointed in the

the length of the way, he would meet with inns to refresh at, and friends to console him. Whereas, in the maze that he had chosen, one false step, one moment of forgetfulness, and he was sunk for ever. Shuddering at his danger, I resolved not to be his companion; therefore lost no time in engaging the guides which he had dismissed, and who continue to improve upon acquaintance. The plainness of the features of honesty daily wear off; while the artless beauty of truth hourly grows more lovely."

Doctor Mirvan was on the point of expressing his approbation, when a servant entered with the intelligence that Lord Belmont, having walked to the public house, had gone thence in a post-chaise and four.

The Doctor, determining again to pursue him, immediately took his leave, promising to return so soon as he should

have

have any thing to communicate. This he did after an absence of three days, during which he vainly sought the Earl, who, it was not difficult to see, had, in expectation of the pursuit, given such intimation of his intended route at all places where he changed horses, as must mislead those who were guided by it.

Distressed in mind, and fatigued in body, he retired to obtain a few hours rest, when it was determined that he should accompany the Countess to London, there to lay before the Lord Chancellor all the particulars of Geraldwood's birth and life with which they were acquainted, as well as her Ladyship's suspicions of her Lord.

To this end, Mark was ordered to attend, but he was not any where to be found; nor could any account be given of him since the return of Lord Belmont to Beech Grove; at which time, he had been commanded by the Countess, to

keep

keep out of sight, as she feared lest the temptations to which he would be exposed, might be too powerful for his honesty to withstand.

This unlooked-for information as greatly increased their fears, as it diminished their hopes. This journey promised little now, weakened as was the proof of Miss Orphan's being the daughter of Lady Jane, by the loss of the only evidence upon which they built her claim. While they consulted on their now desperate cause, the door of the room in which they sat was suddenly thrown open, and a man rushed in, bearing in his arms the lifeless body of a female. Throwing her upon a sofa, he wildly called for assistance, nor was it until he had repeated his entreaty, that Doctor Mirvan recollected the voice of Lord John Walsingham, whose face and clothes were so disfigured with blood, as to render his person

hardly

hardly distinguishable, had the surprize of those around allowed them to discriminate.

The Countess, who had ran to the assistance of the lady, and who after stopping with her handkerchief the blood which streamed from a wound upon her temple, proceeded to wipe it from her face, when, on seeing her features, she exclaimed, in a voice of horror, "Great God! it is Geraldwood, and she is dead."

The house was now in alarm, and Lady Felix was allowed full scope to exercise her bustling disposition, hurrying up stairs and down, ordering well aired beds, bandages, cataplasms, embrocations, and decoctions—rattling her bunch of keys—sending one servant with a wrong one, then calling another to take the right—the servants all running to do the same thing, and each one leaving it for the other to do. The noise and confusion which

which prevailed, brought the solitary Jane to her recollection. She dreaded lest the alarm should reach her, and was giving directions to prevent her receiving any information of who the dying lady was, other than a stranger, when she rushed into the room, followed by a rustic girl, who was endeavouring to detain her. Her horror-struck countenance left no doubt on the minds of the beholders, of her being acquainted with the extent of her misery.

Approaching the sofa, she gazed upon the lovely form of the still insensible Geraldwood—then, raising her eyes to Heaven, and pressing her spread hands upon her bosom, she said with solemnity, "I yet am patient;" then, exalting her voice, repeated in a hurried accent, "Yes, yes, I yet am patient," and flung herself with violence upon the floor.

Lady Felix raised, and led her towards the door,

door, begging she would not do so again, as she would kill herself. Releasing herself from Lady Felix, she looked wildly in her face, then seizing her arm, dragged her with incredible velocity to the spot where her daughter lay, and pointing with her other hand, she said, "Look there, that's my child, she is dead, and I still live—will any thing kill me?" Then bursting into a horrid laugh, she added, "No, no; I shall never die."

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

DOCTOR Mirvan, leaving Geraldwood to the care of the surgeon who had been sent for, assisted in conducting the unhappy lady to her apartment; and before his return, our heroine, having shewn symptoms of life, was conducted to that which had been prepared for her.

On inquiry, it was found that the girl who followed Lady Jane into the room, had, on learning that the wounded stranger was the long-lost daughter of Lady Jane, hurried to the apartment of that unfortunate lady, with the intelligence of her being found dead, killed by murderers,

murderers, the effect of which information we have seen.

Lord John was now called upon to satisfy the curiosity of the friends, as to the circumstances of his meeting with Miss Orphan, when he related, that from the moment of his hearing the manner of her being seduced from Mrs. Cradock's, his suspicions fell on Mr. Walton—that finding he was out of town, he was determined to seek him, nor return until he had discovered him, if he was in England. To this end, he had visited several places where he had heard he sometimes went, and at last, chance directed him to inquire of a gentleman who had a few days before left him in ——— shire. Thither he resolved to bend his course, and proceeded accordingly; when, having slept at an inn, which he was quitting very early in the morning, he found a post-chaise at the gate, into which a ruffian-looking

fian-looking man was busied in conveying some provisions and bottles of liquor, after which, he got in, and it drove off; all the blinds being closely drawn up.

The appearance of this person with the extreme caution he observed, not suffering any one to approach the carriage, induced his Lordship to inquire of the waiter if he had any knowledge of him. He was told, that he had only stopped there a few minutes, but that he understood he was one of your mad doctors who was carrying a crazy woman to Bedlam. Lord John observed, that he was more likely bringing her thence, from the road he was travelling; and his chaise being now ready, he proceeded on his journey. His route laying across the country, his carriage soon left the high road, and entered a lane, in which they had not gone far, when he observed the same chaise which had left the inn-yard, directly before him,

and that it was obstructed in its progress by a loaded waggon, the driver whereof would not be persuaded to move either to the right or to the left. Not knowing how long he might be detained, he mounted his servant's horse and rode forward, calling to the driver of the foremost chaise, whom he advised to try what effect his horse-whip would have on the obstinacy of that mule; when at the instant, a shriek from the carriage with the name of "Walsingham," reached his ear. Riding directly up to the window, he inquired who called him, but did not receive an answer, though he heard a noise within the vehicle like people struggling.

The lane now suddenly branching off into two opposite paths, the waggoner took one, while the foremost chaise took the other, driving so furiously as to be soon nearly out of sight, while his Lordship was

giving directions to his servant to take the same road, and follow him as fast as he could. Then, putting spurs to his horse, his Lordship soon came near enough to desire the postillion to stop; which finding him not attend to, he without further hesitation, struck him a blow on the head with his whip which brought him to the ground, when he again demanded to know who was within, and was answered by the blind being let down, and a pistol discharged with such good aim, that the contents of it passed through his hat.

The villain within, seeing that he had not succeeded, jumped out, and seizing Lord John by the legs, dragged him from his horse, making several blows at him with the but end of his pistol, in which he was suddenly prevented by its being wrested from his grasp, and thrown to some distance, by the female who had sprung out of the carriage, for which she

received a stroke with one hand which knocked her down, while, with the other, he grasped the throat of Lord John, who declared he thought all his affairs in this world were on the point of being settled, when he suddenly felt himself released, and saw his opponent stretched on the field of battle, while he heard a seraphic voice, the music of which he should never forget, sweetly say, "D—n my eyes, that won't do neither: Go to hell, you lubber, do you call that fair fighting, to crack a man's windpipe?"

Then perceiving Lord John move, he proceeded, "Well, my hearty, how do you find yourself?"

"A great deal the better for your company, Sir," replied his Lordship.

"By the Lord Harry, I believe you," returned his defender. "But get up, and let's see if all your timbers be tight, for-

I thinks they be but of a slender sort, more for shew than use; and not much for that neither."

Lord John was not in a humour to take exceptions; he therefore asked, "But where is the lady, Sir?"

"Lady," said the man, "I've seen no lady."

They now perceived that she had fallen behind the chaise, and hastened to her assistance, when the prostrate villain, who had hitherto lain perfectly still, rose with precipitation, and mounting Lord John's horse, was out of sight in a moment, to the great mortification of his Lordship, who, too late, regretted his want of attention in suffering him to escape.

On raising Geraldwood from the ground, the defender of Lord John uttered a cry of surprize, which was re-echoed by his companion, for both at the same

same instant discovered her of whom they were in search, in the person of the sufferer they had rescued. Though their surprize had been equal, their satisfaction was not; for his Lordship believed her reason to be irreparably injured, when he saw her, on opening her eyes, look earnestly in the face of the stranger, and then throw herself into his arms, calling him her father, her dear protector, from whom she would never more be separated; but when he saw the man hug her to his bosom, and blubber over her, until large drops from his eyes fell upon her face, he knew not what to think, but impatiently asked, "Do you know me, Geraldwood?"

Raising her head from the shoulder of Mark, for my readers will have perceived it could be no other, she held out her hand, saying, "Forgive me, my Lord, if I have appeared so unkind; but this is my

 father,

father, my poor father, who, when last I saw him, was in great trouble. I too have been in trouble, but, its all over, since you have saved me from that bad, terrible man."

"Answer me one question," demanded Mark, somewhat ferociously, who was employing himself in taking his handkerchief from his own neck, and binding it round her head to stop the bleeding, "answer me one question, I say, who gave you this blow?"

She informed him.

"How?—tell me," he continued, "was he the same that confined you in the castle—he that broke his leg, I mean?"

"The same," she answered.

"That's enough—that's enough," he repeated, raising his voice, and clenching his fist. "I will thank him for all favours, when next we meet, and it sha'n't be long first."

Lord John's chaise being now come

up,

up, they placed Geraldwood in it—Mark advising the little gentleman to go with her, both as he was fitter company, and because he did not think he looked like one of your walkers; he then directed what road they should go, which he informed them was the most direct way to Beech-Grove, where they would find people, and every thing they wanted, and where he would join them, and, mayhap, bring back the young Lord's horse, as he should try to have a word with its present possessor. Perceiving that Geraldwood's countenance was overcast, at the thought of his seeking Nugent, and mistaking the cause, he seized the arm of Lord John, who was stepping into the carriage, saying, "Avast, my man—may be she don't like you to go with her—mayhap she knows more of you than is good."

Our heroine assured him, that his

Lordship was one of her dearest friends; and added, "This is not the first time that you have given me to his care; nor, my Lord, is it the first time in which you have generously taken charge of me —this is the man who made you the valuable present in the park of the Duke, your father."

"Is it possible?" cried Lord John, catching his hand. "Thank you, my good fellow, heartily; most heartily do I thank you."

Mark, who had most carefully perused the countenance of his Lordship, now said, "By Jove, I do believe it, for I recollect you was a little shaver, then. Well, my fine lad, I beg pardon, my Lord, I mean; you may comfort yourself with knowing you never did a better day's work, than when you took care of Miss there; for thof may be she mayn't reward you, nor I neither; because I hav'n't

hav'n't got the power, yet there is one who has (pointing upwards significantly with his thumb) and who, they say, sees every thing we do, and pays us the full price of our earnings, without any going to law, or fending, or proving, or such like; and so, if that be true, you stand a good chance. For my own part, I hope he won't be so very particular, it will be the worse luck for Mark, if he's so; but Miss looks very poorly, so make the best of your way, and don't stop till you come to Beech-Grove; there Miss will find all she wants, and more than she expects; and I hope to be back very soon, because I thinks to ride it."

He now took the same road the run-away had taken; and Lord John that which he had directed, in which he had not proceeded far, when the wound in Geraldwood's temple, began again to bleed, until within a mile of Beech-Grove,

 when

when she fainted; and in spite of all the efforts of her protector to restore her, she remained insensible.

When his Lordship had ended, and received the commendations of his auditors, the Countess perused a letter, which had been delivered to her, during his recital. The exclamation of, "What, new plots a-foot?" now excited the curiosity of Dr. Mirvan; which, however, he had no time to express; for her Ladyship presenting the letter to him, desired him to read it, for the edification of the company. In obedience to her command, he read as follows:

"I doubt not that my sudden depar-
"ture from Beech-Grove, has been as
"much misconstrued as most other well-
"intended actions of my life have been.
"But be it so—I can despise my calum-
"niators. As I shall be with you in a
"day

"day or two after this letter, I shall only "say, that at the time I left you, I "hoped, nay, I believed, those whom I "had directed to search must have dis-"covered and secured the person of the "young woman who had boasted her de-"scent from my family; not to satisfy "myself, for I never entertained a doubt, "but you and others, whose opinions were "of far less consequence, of her being an "impostor. In this belief, I led you to "suppose that she was already in my "power. I have since discovered that "I spoke too confidently; she has eluded "my pursuit, nor have I now any clue by "which I can hope to trace her; she, hav-"ing foolishly been made acquainted with "my intentions, has with all the avidity "and secrecy of guilt, removed from her "late habitation; nor do I suppose that "any of us will ever hear more of her, or "her pretensions; for which I feel no

"other concern, than as it prevents my "detecting the contrivers and abettors of "her not badly planned imposition: they "alone being the objects of my resent- "ment.

"Your's, most fondly,

"BELMONT."

"Most extraordinary!" said Doctor Mirvan, "what does your Ladyship think of it?"

"That it is a master-piece," answered the Countess, "and would have deceived us, had we not been better informed than he imagines. But pray, my good Sir, do not let us too readily undeceive him—I protest I am quite curious to see how he will proceed; for high as is my opinion of his abilities, I think in this case he will be puzzled, either to disentangle himself, or, what he is equally clever at, entangle others. If he does, I shall conceive my- self

self bound, as an admirer of the fine arts, to doff my bonnet to him, as the greatest genius of the age."

It was agreed that he should not be informed of the discovery of Geraldwood, on his first arrival. She in the interim had fallen into a peaceful slumber, which lasted through the night, during the greater part of which the bewildered Jane, glided like a restless spirit from one room to another, frequently approaching the bed of her sleeping child—listening to her breathing; then softly retiring, soon return to listen again. Her fearful look, at entering the room, contrasted with the expression of delight, which shone in her countenance at quitting it, forcibly depicted the interest, and the wandering of her mind, which could not retain the conviction, that the object of her care still lived. Towards morning, she was prevailed upon to retire to bed, and by the assistance of

strong opiates, obtained that repose of which she stood so greatly in need; from which she awoke, more composed than her friends had dared to hope.

When the Countess, who was present, inquired how she felt herself, she said that she had been greatly harassed through the night by horrid dreams of having seen the corpse of her daughter, who had been murdered, but by whom she could not tell, and afterwards she thought that she was not dead, but dying—that she had distinctly seen a dreadful wound upon her temple; and that notwithstanding her face had been disfigured with blood, she retained the most perfect recollection of every feature. Then, taking her friend's hand, she continued, "Indeed, my dear Susan, every part of this vision was so compleat, that I cannot doubt its being something more than a common dream; consequently, that it is intended

to

to deprive me of the foolish hope my heart has hitherto entertained of discovering my child, and in that hope clinging to life; it has succeeded. My Mary sleeps in peace, and I feel that I shall shortly rejoin her, in that world, where the wretched and the fortunate are of equal estimation."

"Dear Jane," returned the Countess, with warmth, while a tear trickled down her cheek, "I do think you are the most provoking creature living—always so ready to catch at misery. Was it not quite as easy, and I am sure much more natural, to fancy your dream, which I admit was very particular, boded something good and pleasant, as all these dismals; but that's not your way—one would imagine that you lived in a tomb, for you think of nothing but death. Now, pray, be rational, for once, and reflect, you first saw your daughter dead, then alive—now

now either it was a stupid business altogether, and not to be attended to, or it meant to shew you, that although you had thought her dead, she was still alive."

Lady Jane mournfully shook her head.

"Now, for mercy's sake, dear Jane," continued her Ladyship, "cheer up a little. If your daughter should see you for the first time, in this plight, she will never desire to see you again; and nobody knows how soon she may be here, for Doctor Mirvan is come, and says she will be here to——" She saw, by the wildness of her unhappy friend's eye, that she had gone too far, and suddenly stopped.

"When!" cried the sufferer, starting from her pillow, and grasping the arm of the Countess, "When will she be here?"

"Very soon—in a few days," stammered Lady Belmont. Lady Jane relinquished her hold, and falling back upon her

her pillow, burst into a violent hysteric laugh. The attendant hurried from the room, and returned with Doctor Mirvan.

The fit was long and severe, leaving her shattered frame so exhausted, that Doctor Mirvan deemed it improper to acquaint her with the actual situation of Geraldwood, who had awakened much recovered; to which the happiness of being released from persecution, and restored to her friends, had so greatly contributed, as to make her protest she had never felt herself so perfectly well in her whole life. Encouraged by this assurance, and fearing that she might learn the secret of her birth from some less prudent informer, Doctor Mirvan had undertaken the delightful task of relieving her mind from every uneasy sensation, except what the account of her mother's past sufferings, and present illness, left upon it. Painfully impatient as she was to be pres-

sed

sed to the bosom of this new-found parent, she submitted to the desire of her early friend, to wait a less hazardous occasion.

On being summoned to Lady Jane, Doctor Mirvan had left his favourite to the care of Lady Felix, who had taken her into the flower garden, which, to poor Geraldwood, who had been so long without seeing any thing of the vegetable world, or breathing the fresh air, appeared more beautiful than any thing she had ever seen. Like a bird, escaped from its cage, she flew from flower to flower, admiring and admired; for the gratified Lady Felix, who, like most other ladies, was extremely fond of praise, felt delighted with the praiser, and thought her, as she skipped about, "the handsomest Lunnun lady she had ever seed."

Pleased as she saw her young friend was, she flattered herself she had it in her power to afford her far greater pleasure, by

by introducing her to her cows. She accordingly proposed a walk to the farm-yard, which was readily acceded to; and during their walk, the time was beguiled in detailing the various perfections of the animals they were on the point to visit, some of which excelled in external, others in internal beauty, and Geraldwood could not help observing, that like other females, these perfections were seldom united; being given to understand, that she which had the mildest temper, made the best mother, or gave the most milk, had often the least beauty of the whole group, and vice versâ.

Fully occupied with the merits and demerits of these favourites, they reached the part alotted for their peculiar resting-place during the heat of the day, without any interruption, save what was occasioned by a small deviation, just to take a peep at the pigs—a short excursion to the

the poultry-yard—and the conveying a few greens to the rabbit-hutches. From the cows they proceeded to the pigeon-house, thence to the rookery—nor was the kitchen-garden, the orchard, or the dairy omitted. All were enchanting—all were extolled; but alas! every thing must have an end; and though her Ladyship's curiosities were as numerous, and their perfections as minutely detailed as most people's, to this they did come at last, and the proposal of returning to the house was made, yet not without some hope, that Miss Orphan might express a wish to take another look in, en passânt, on some of her Ladyship's favourites. This not happening, rather damped the spirits of their owner, notwithstanding which, we do not hesitate to pronounce this to have been amongst the happiest mornings of her life.

On entering the house, Geraldwood intending

intending to return to her own room, entered a gallery which led to it, when she perceived a female coming from another apartment, whose elegant form, and highly interesting face engaged her attention. Her wild, melancholy look, in a moment convinced her that she saw her ill-fated parent. Fearful of surprizing her, as she appeared to be deeply meditating, she was on the point of retiring; but an impulse she was unable to resist, impelled her to take yet another view of the being who had given her birth. At that instant, she raised her eyes, which had before been fixed upon the ground—they met those of our heroine. Starting, as though greatly terrified, she retreated some paces, looking wildly back, seemingly more observant of the bandage around her head, than of her features.

Exceedingly shocked at the alarm which she had occasioned, Geraldwood was

was hastening away, which being perceived by Lady Jane, she stopped, and in a voice of entreaty said, "Beautiful vision do not leave me; twice I have seen you—Oh! say, what is your errand to the luckless Jane? Is it to meet you in a better world—are you not the spirit of my Mary?" Geraldwood could endure no more—her prudence, her resolution were overcome. Approaching, in a hurried step, she fell at the feet of her mother, and faintly articulating, "Oh! my mother, bless, bless your child;" sunk senseless on the floor. A piercing cry, uttered by the terrified parent, alarmed the family. On reaching the gallery they found Lady Jane had fallen by the side of her daughter, whom she had encircled with her arms, but both were alike insensible.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

GERALDWOOD was easily recovered; but for a length of time, even Doctor Mirvan feared, that the long-suffering spirit of the hapless mother had fled for ever. He even dreaded, from this shock, and the prior deranged state of her mind, lest returning life should only bring with it an aggravation of her miseries. But, contrary to his expectations, and indeed beyond all hope, her revival was marked with expressions of recollection and calmness. She desired to see her child, whom they had thought it prudent to remove, bidding those about her, not to fear any further extravagance on her part, as she

was

was too sensible of her own want of strength, and now too desirous of life, to attempt any thing which would not rather promote than retard her cure. In compliance with her desire, Geraldwood, a title we shall for the present continue, was recalled; and after the first emotions, occasioned by a most affecting interview, had subsided, they were left alone.

Towards evening, Lord Belmont returned to Beech-Grove, having in his own mind placed his grand-daughter beyond the possibility of discovery; and hoping that his letter to the Countess had done away every suspicion of himself, he re-assumed the haughty deportment, and the lofty look, which he was wont to wear, and which he had insensibly departed from, during the uncertainty of his success; insomuch that none could but observe the difference: which struck the Countess so forcibly, as he alighted, that she exclaimed,

claimed, "And Richard is himself again."

On entering, he smiled on her Ladyship—bowed his head to Lady Felix—and spoke in a tone of condescension to Doctor Mirvan. After a little time, Lady Felix, who could not long remain silent, addressed him with—

"So, my Lord Belmont, you hav'n't brought no good news for poor Jane, at last!"

He sighed, and shaking his head, said, "And yet she ought to think herself fortunate in having detected this artful imposture, before she had exposed herself and her friends (casting his eyes on the Countess and Doctor Mirvan) to the ridicule of the world."

"It would have been rare fun for the great folks," returned her Ladyship; "I warrant, they would not be much obliged

to

to your Lordship, for hindering them such a fine deal of gossip."

"But," said the Earl, "as we are upon this subject, of which even I am almost ashamed, what had we best do with the fellow, this young hussy's accomplice? My own opinion is, that we ought to give him into custody, or have him examined before a magistrate. What thinks Doctor Mirvan?"

"Why," answered Lady Felix, after a loud laugh, "the Doctor says, you must find him first."

Although his Lordship had learned the diesertion of Mark, before he reached the house, he betrayed the greatest surprize on being informed of his absence—asked what steps had been taken to recover him, and extremely censured the unpardonable negligence of every part of the family. At this moment, Lady Jane,

leaving

leaning on the arm of Geraldwood, and of Lord John Walsingham, entered the room.

It would require an abler pen than mine to describe the horror of the Earl. He leaned against the wainscot, staggering back to it several paces, while his pale, feeble daughter, slowly advancing, presented to him her Mary, whom she entreated him to receive and bless, which the less interested spectators saw he had not the power to do, as his starting eyes and swollen countenance, proclaimed him to be on the point of suffocating. Hastening to his relief, he was conveyed to another room, where he was with difficulty preserved from a death, at once sudden and violent. Thence he was taken to bed, where he passed a night, too dearly purchased, had it been recompensed by the full accomplishment of his most sanguine wishes.

From a part of his horrors he was, how-

ever, relieved the following morning by the attendance of his valet, who finding his master out of spirits, from, as he supposed, his late illness, laboured to entertain him, by relating the wonderful story of Lord John Walsingham's having rescued the lady from a robber, who was on the point of strangling his Lordship, when a traveller interposed; but while he was recovering the poor dying gentleman, the robber had attempted to murder the lady, and had given her a terrible blow with his pistol (which occasioned her head being tied up) after which he had made his escape.

The Earl listened with avidity, and felt a gleam of hope revisit his bosom, at learning that Nugent, had not, as he suspected, betrayed him. He now re-examined his situation, and it appeared less desperate; at least, his honour was safe. Therefore, smoothing his features,

and

and arguing down the perturbation of his mind, he repaired to the breakfast-room; where, after apologizing for the trouble he had occasioned, he begged to learn the story of Miss Orphan's rescue, and whether they had any additional motive for supposing her the child which Lady Jane had lost.

On hearing the whole detail, to which he appeared to give the utmost attention, he declared that he was by no means convinced Miss Orphan was the person they supposed her to be; yet he had not any objection to her being considered as such, until the question should be decided by a less partial tribunal than they appeared. To which he added, that he felt himself conscientiously bound, on his son's account, to have her identity proved, as she would, if once acknowledged as the daughter of Lady Jane, deprive him of a large fortune. Doctor Mirvan, whose

suspicions were again shaken, gave his unqualified approbation of his Lordship's decision, and the subject was dropped.

Scarcely was the repast finished, when a servant entered, with intelligence that the robber, from whom Lord John Walsingham had rescued the young lady, was taken, and brought to Beech-Grove by Mark—the man whom they all supposed had run away, and that they waited without, to know his Lordship's pleasure.

"This," said Lord John, "is most fortunate, as it must tend to obviate or confirm Lord Belmont's scruples." Turning to Lady Felix, "have I your Ladyship's permission to bid them enter?"

"Yes, to be sure," replied her Ladyship, "how formal you are. Don't you think we all wants to know what he has to say?"

The command for their appearance was accordingly given; and the young woman who

who had been the bearer of Geraldwood's arrival to Lady Jane, and who was anxious to make atonement for what her imprudence had at that time occasioned her to suffer, now hastened to her Ladyship, with, as she concluded, the delightful intelligence that the murderer was below, and just going to be examined; urged by curiosity to see what kind of monster it could be who could injure so faultless a being, the partial mother, attended by her daughter, repaired to the breakfast-room, and had reached it ere the culprit entered.

Meanwhile, the Earl, who though greatly shocked by Nugent's being taken, highly congratulated himself on his being present at the examination; not doubting, but by that fortunate event, to awe him into silence, even had he been otherways inclined. Mark soon made his appearance, followed by his captive, and

two peace-officers. Lord John eagerly greeted his deliverer, who replied, by inquiring how Miss did. Being satisfied in this particular, and having expressed his joy, he added, "I have kept my word, your horse is without."

"You have done better," answered his Lordship, "the thief is within, and you are a prince of fine fellows, and shall never want a horse to ride on, while John Walsingham inhabits this globe; but where did you find that villain, and what has he to say for himself?"

"Put your questions," sullenly returned the prisoner; "and such as I like, I'll answer."

"Are you not," inquired Doctor Mirvan, "the person from whom this nobleman rescued a young lady on Tuesday last?"

"I am."

"Whence were you bringing her?"

"London."

"London."

"Whither were you conveying her?"

"To a sea-port."

"What sea-port?"

"It can be of no consequence."

"Granted. But, for what purpose were you conducting her to a sea-port?"

"To put her on board of ship."

"Did you mean to take her out of England?"

"Aye; where you would never have heard of her more."

"What motive could be powerful enough to prompt you to so villainous, and seemingly so fruitless a project?"

"Love of money, and fear of death."

"You had an employer, then?"

"I had."

Here the Earl interposed, saying, he much doubted the propriety of these inquiries, as the offence appeared to him of a nature to require a more legal examina-

 tion,

tion, and requested the affair might be left to him.

Doctor Mirvan, whose suspicions of his Lordship were again awakened, paid no other attention to this interruption, than what was conveyed in an indignant look; but continued. "You must be sensible, that however rich, or however exalted that employer may be, his power is at an end. Miss Orphan is restored to her friends; to friends who will protect her with their lives; and who will lose no time, nor spare any labour, in bringing to justice her oppressors. You will, therefore, do wisely by naming your employer, and so entitle yourself to all the mercy which so infamous a transaction, and so heinous a breach of the laws of your country will admit."

The prisoner replied, "It was the Earl of Belmont. She is his grand-daughter, and stands in his way.—I am the high-

wayman

wayman taken by his servants some years back, and have since been his slave—my life was in his power—he saved it, and now I have rewarded him."

The solemn silence which succeeded this declaration was broken by the horror-stricken Jane, who entreated that they would bear her thence, while she retained her reason; lest in the tumult of her soul, she should go mad, and curse the author of her being.

The Earl, starting from the profound reverie into which he had sunk, on Nugent pronouncing his name, exclaimed, "No, no; stay and blast me with your imprecations—I have deserved them—I too, will curse myself, and you, and all the world. I will not live to be the scoff of fools, or be insulted by their pity." Then striking his forehead with violence, he rushed out of the room.

The deeply injured, but forgiving Geraldwood,

raldwood, shocked at the wildness of his manner, resigned the care of her mother to the Countess, and hastened to follow him. She found him in an adjoining apartment, extended on the floor, and to all appearance in the agonies of death. She knelt, supporting his head, and bathing his temples with her lavender-water, whilst tears of inexpressible compassion rolled down her cheek. After some time, he opened his eyes, and staring wildly around, fixed them on Geraldwood.

Suddenly starting from her supporting arm, he exclaimed, "Is that hateful form ever to pursue me?"

"Indeed, Sir," cried the weeping girl, "I meant not to offend; but you were very ill."

"Yes," he furiously returned, "and never shall be well. You have destroyed; and now, you follow, to insult me."

"Indeed, my Lord," she sobbed out, "you

"you greatly wrong me—I thought you lying."

"Oh!" he cried, "that I were dead; then would this burning in my bosom cease—then might this tumult in my brain be calmed."

"Great God! restore his peace!" fervently exclaimed his pitying grand-daughter.

He gazed on her with wonder. "Restore my peace!" he repeated; "is it for my peace you pray? No, no, it cannot be; I have persecuted, I have injured you, and I must pay the penalty—I must be the object of your hate, of your vengeance. I will not, cannot live;" and he darted past her, and left the room, whilst she, terrified, hurried back to her friends, entreating them to follow, and prevent the dreadful catastrophe which she feared he meditated.

The Countess begged her to compose herself, as she knew Lord Belmont better; but finding her arguments fruitless, she

went to his apartment, where she found him pacing the room.

At sight of her, he called out, "At last you are come. Had it not been for the pride or malice of that serpent whom you have enabled to sting me, I should have perished. I was dying, but she prevented it—my curses be her thanks."

"And all the thanks she will have from many," returned her indignant Ladyship; "the preserving such a life can merit nothing else—a life which is not a blessing, even to its possessor. Oh! Lord Belmont, what a heart is your's; will noing soften it? Not even the humanity, the kindness of the deeply injured Geraldwood? She whom you would have overwhelmed."

"For whose sake," interrupted his Lordship, "was she injured? For whose sake would I have overwhelmed her? For your's, ungrateful woman. My love for you,

you, prompted all my thoughts—for you I changed my nature—I sacrificed my pride—I became a villain to secure your person—I degraded my children to gratify your wishes—I ruined my fortune to support your extravagance—I had no means left but by becoming a monster; and how have you repaid me? By giving your person to another—by destroying my peace—by combining with my enemies to load me with infamy—and lastly, by triumphing in my fall."

"These are heavy charges, Lord Belmont," replied the Countess; "I hope, I do not merit them all; but as that cannot be decided just now, let them pass; I am going——"

"I know it," eagerly interrupted the Earl—"to leave me—to abandon me in my disgrace—to fly from me, and my distresses. Go, go, ungrateful, unfeeling woman, I can die."

"As

"As to dying," said the Countess, coolly, "you will die when you cannot help it, and not one hour before; and, as to my leaving you, that would be impolitic. For if your ideas of me are well-founded, it is a pity we should separate, as neither would, in all probability, again meet its match; therefore, I shall stay by you, and administer all the consolation you can derive from a contaminated person—an ungrateful, unfeeling heart—a spendthrift—an enemy—who first ruins, and then triumphs in your disgrace. Yet do not despair of comfort; remember, I am a kindred spirit."

"No, no," cried his Lordship, "you are my saviour. You will not leave me—say, you will not."

"I have said it."

"Oh! compleat your goodness, and forgive what my distraction uttered—you are my guardian angel (the Countess smiled)—

smiled)—your heart is the resting-place of every virtue."

"Stop, stop, my Lord; or one of my numberless virtues will compel me to withdraw. Modesty forbids my listening to the recital of my merits. To be compared to your guardian angel, was not amiss, because he seems to have been a sorry fellow; and has slept, or been extremely remiss in his duty, if we are to judge from your present situation. But to hear of my heart being the resting-place of every virtue, is too much, unless, indeed, your Lordship means to be witty, and insinuate, that the said virtues, like your guardian angel, had a dormant commission; in which case, one of Lady Felix's bustling principles would be worth the whole of them. In short, my Lord, I am neither so virtuous as your good, nor so vicious as your ill-humour represents me. Truth, I myself think, lies mid-

way;

way; for I have generally found, when any of my virtues sallied forth, they were arrested in their course by some of my vices; and I do recollect something of the same kind happening on the part of my virtues, which appeared like retaliation; insomuch, that I could not help comparing vice and virtue to man and wife—never of the same mind. But, my Lord, I came from your grand-daughter; who, poor silly soul, has taken it into her head, that you have nothing but poniards and pistols in your's, and that you have resolved on death; nor could I laugh her out of her fears."

"Could you, Lady Belmont, laugh on such a subject?"

"Would you have had me cry for what I knew was most unlikely to happen? Yet, perhaps, I could not have had a more sufficient reason for my tears."

"Cruel woman, is this a time for satire?"

"I have done; only tell me what I must say to Geraldwood."

"That my life is in her hands."

"That, I think, will be going rather too far; so I will say, that to oblige her, you will live a little longer."

CHAP. XXXIX.

SHE now returned to our anxious heroine, who had been inexpressibly shocked at the distress of her grand-father.

On entering the room, her Ladyship said, "Well, my love, there he sits, armed at all points—here the drawn dagger—there the poisoned bowl—and only awaits your determination which he shall make choice of. Death is his wish; but if you command it, he will try to live."

"Then, he *will* try to live," exclaimed the delighted girl; "and oh! may he forget that he has ever been unhappy. I would not see him again in such a state for all the wealth I have deprived him of."

The sudden entrance of the Marquis of L—— prevented her proceeding. He clasped her to his heart in silence, until the violence of his agitation having overcome him, he staggered back some paces, and pressing his hand upon his forehead, feebly articulated, "My love—we will part no more."

Geraldwood now first observed his wan and death-like countenance, which seemed to contradict his words, with the promise of a speedy and eternal separation. But after a few minutes, he recovered sufficiently, to say he had been ill, but was already much better, and should be quite well, the cause of his disorder being removed. He had been informed by Lord John of the situation and safety of his wife—the certainty of her being the daughter of Lady Jane—and the anxious endeavours which his uncle and the Countess had made to discover, and see justice done her.

To

To them he now expressed his gratitude, in a manner which spoke the magnitude of his obligation to them; but his meeting with his brother was exceedingly affecting. The sight of his altered face and person had filled Lord John with the most uncontrollable alarm, which not all his assurances of amended health could tranquillize. To turn their thoughts from himself, he talked of his sister, who he said would be there on the following day—that she was to have been his companion, but apprehending that her fears for him might impede his progress, he had left the house privately. At the request of the Marchioness, for as such we must now introduce our heroine, she having been acknowledged as such by the Duke and Duchess of M——, previous to the departure of their sons from town, assisted by Doctor Mirvan's authority, the Marquis retired to rest at a very early

hour,

hour, and felt himself sufficiently refreshed to attend the breakfast-table the following morning. Here he, for the first time, saw Lady Jane, and was received as the beloved husband of her idolized daughter. As he contemplated her beautiful, woe-worn countenance, it brought to his recollection what he had often heard of her ill-fated marriage, and her aggravated sufferings; and he inwardly cursed the parent, who had, by insisting on the first, been the eventual cause of all. Little did he suppose that that parent, and the persecutor of his wife, were the same; but in this ignorance he did not long remain; for the servants were no sooner withdrawn, than the Marchioness pressing the hand of her mother, said, "Oh! my dear parent, surrounded as we are with blessings, signalized as we have been by the especial care of Providence, does it become us to be severe in chastisement? Oh! no—we

will

will not oppress the fallen—let us speak peace and comfort to the penitent heart of poor Lord Belmont."

"Name him not," said her Ladyship; withdrawing her hand.

"Indeed, I must," returned the Marchioness. "He asks for your forgiveness —he pleads for it—a parent pleads—a child must not refuse him."

"I will never see him more," said she; rising to leave the room.

Her daughter detained her, and falling upon her knees, repeated her entreaties.

Lady Jane listened to her. Then, with a firm and determined voice, replied, "Geraldwood, for by that name you were restored to me, attend to my fixed resolve: I will never more see Lord Belmont—he is my father—I will not now recount the sorrows which he has heaped upon me; but, not content with blighting the glowing prospect of my early life, he

pursued

pursued me through it, merciless, and without remorse—he drove me to despair." Then, with raised voice and phrenzied eye, she continued, "Yes, he saw me on the brink of madness, yet he refused to save me. Me, who had sacrificed my all of happiness to procure him gratification—me, he hurried down the precipice on which his craft had placed me, when, with one little sentence he might have spoken peace to my breast, and driven phrenzy from my brain. He urged me on to desperation; and you, my innocent, my unoffending child, where would he have placed you? My soul shudders at the thought. Inhuman, barbarous Lord Belmont! But why, why," she added, as she hurried from the room, "am I forced upon such horrid recollections?" She was followed by the Countess, and her terrified daughter.

Greatly as the Marquis had been shocked,

he

he could not conceal his wish to be made acquainted with the particulars to which the suffering lady had alluded, and in Lady Felix found a prompt informer. He listened with amazement and detestation to a detail so monstrous and unnatural—a detail, in the delivery of which, though her Ladyship might not have merited the praise of brevity, she certainly did that of truth, which she resolved he should be a judge of; for she concluded with saying, "Now, my Lord, as I have given you my tale, I will give you my tale-bearer, as the saying is—so, come along with me;" and she conducted him to Mark and Nugent, who more than confirmed all that she had related.

On his return to the breakfast-room, he found the Marchioness and the Countess there. They had left Lady Jane more composed, and desirous of being alone. At the mention of her name, the

the ill-stifled indignation of the Marquis burst forth. He imprecated curses on the head of the Earl, to whom he vowed eternal enmity, and unceasing persecution. In vain did our heroine plead—in vain did she remonstrate; he was equally deaf to her arguments, and her entreaties. He protested, that he felt himself called upon, as a man, and as a citizen, to see the severest punishment inflicted on a delinquent, whose enormous and unnatural offences were a disgrace to the age he lived in.—That justice to herself—to Lady Jane—to his mother—whose mind he had perverted, and to mankind, compelled him, had he even wished otherwise, (which, Heaven knew, he did not) to hold him up as a proof, that nobility of birth, combined with learning, fortune, and consequence, were inadequate to protect a villain.

They were here interrupted by the en-

trance of Lady Georgina: who flew to the extended arms of her early friend, and continued shedding tears of transport on her bosom; until the Countess, who feared the various and violent emotions which the Marchioness had lately experienced, might injure her still delicate health, forcibly led her to a seat; then, turning to her Ladyship, she said, "I fear, this necessary violence will scarcely be deemed an act of courtesy, by Lady Georgina Walsingham; prejudiced, as she long has been, against the mind and manners of the Countess of Belmont."

Lady Georgina, taking her offered hand, entreated her to believe that, this once, the propriety of her conduct had not been mistaken by a member of the Duke of M——'s family. Then, turning to the Marquis, she fondly embraced, and feelingly congratulated him, upon his improving health. Doctor

Doctor Miryan and Lord John now entering, she gave her hand to the former, gaily saying, "Pass on, my good Sir, until I have paid my homage to my little hero, the redoubtable Lord John Walsingham, the defender of injured merit—the valorous deliverer of captive ladies—the restorer of antient chivalry. Oh, that I were a princess, or a goddess, that I might crown you with never-fading laurel!" Then, dropping her heroics, she continued, "but, seriously, John, Fame, with her hundred trumpets, is busy in your praise—Nelson, with all his trappings, stars, medals, orders, and chelenks, must give place to you—the names of Gala Hope and Monk Lewis, will be forgotten, whilst that of Lord John Walsingham will be immortal."

"Say you so?" returned his Lordship. "Why, then, I am once more reconciled to Old England, although a few minutes

 since,

since, I repined that I was not a native of France;—there I should have received the fraternal hug—been voted to have deserved well of my country, and decreed the honours of a sitting."

"Where, if your wit," said the Countess, "became blunt, they could give it an edge; which, I am told, has been found a radical cure for dulness."

"Oftener, I should suppose," said Doctor Mirvan, "for loquacity; dulness has fewer claims upon that august tribunal;—not but that their edge has proved a tolerable useful styptic. My advice is, to stay at home, John, lest you should be found to *want a head for your new occupation.*"

"Oh," returned his Lordship, "your advice, my dear uncle, is needless; the rival of Gala Hope and Monk Lewis, can have no craving left, on the score of notoriety."

"Your

"Your content," returned the Doctor, "I am afraid, is built on a sandy foundation; at least, as to Gala Hope, his laurels are annuals, and every season bloom with increased splendour."

"You terrify me!" cried his Lordship; "why, I am nobody, at last.—But, your opinion of Monk Lewis?"

"I have no opinion of either of those gentlemen," replied Doctor Mirvan; "I only think, that one of them has purchased his good name too dear, and the other sold his too cheap; but, as I understand they are both, what, in these times of latitude, are called young men, I conclude, that they may probably live, one to think he has spent his money foolishly —the other, that he got his disgracefully. But, why does my Lord Marquis look so pensive? If we may judge from his countenance, he has more of the Monk in his thoughts, than either Gala or Hope."

"In truth," replied the Marquis, "I was just then reflecting, how difficult it would be to affix any appropriate epithet to my name; I am certainly not entitled to a fraternal hug, for I cannot be said to have deserved well of my country—even my wife has been left to be defended by others. All your friends, save me, my love, have found an opportunity to serve or oblige you."

"Do you really wish for one?" said the Marchioness.

"Most anxiously."

"Then, it presents itself, and will infinitely oblige me:—be friends with Lord Belmont."

"My love, you ask impossibilities."

"Not if your wish were as earnest as you would have me think. This is my first request—I can never make another, in the prayer of which my heart will be so deeply interested. I do not ask you

to

to take Lord Belmont to your bosom, or your confidence;—only to let the world believe you friends."

The Marquis shook his head.

"Will no one," she continued, "assist me to plead for this poor penitent?—Georgina—Lord John—nor you, Doctor Mirvan? Yet, you had used to be my friend."

"And would be now," replied the doctor, "if I knew any argument to employ, which was likely to succeed; but, indeed, there is only one which the occasion will admit, and that has its foundation in the Marquis's own advantage, therefore will not be listened to by him."

"I do not understand you, uncle," returned his Lordship, "how can it be to my advantage, to pretend friendship with a villain—a monster? Pardon me, Lady Belmont—I entreat you, pardon me?"

"He is," interrupted Doctor Mirvan, "the

"the grandfather of your wife; it is a very near, and ought to be a very dear connection.—Dissentions in families attract observation; in short, I know no end they answer, unless it be to give pain to our friends, and pleasure to our enemies. Lord Belmont, you hear, is penitent, and I can believe it; but whether he is sincerely so, or feigns, can be of small consequence to you. His power to injure you is past; your's to punish remains; but, if exerted, will afford you no real gratification."

The Marquis, after appearing thoughtful for some time, said, "If I believed that he really felt contrition——Lady Belmont, what is your opinion?"

"I have been several times on the point of giving it, uncalled for," replied her Ladyship; "as I verily believe the whole of this company will acquit me of partiality to his Lordship; had I done so, it

it would have exactly coincided with that of Doctor Mirvan, and for the self-same reasons. If I am called upon to declare my idea of his penitence, I shall not hesitate to say, I am sure it is sincere; but I cannot wrong my veracity, or my judgment, so greatly, as to aver, that his sorrow proceeds from his having attempted such a crime; as I doubt whether he would, at present, have felt it, had he been successful."

"I understand you," rejoined the Marquis; "his compunction arises from his disappointment."

"Even so," replied her Ladyship.

"And can such a man be an object of pity?" asked the Marquis.

"In my mind, doubly so, from that very motive," pursued the Countess, "inasmuch as he wants the only consolation which his heart could have given him, and has the additional torture of

ungratified wishes to combat with; as well as a sense of unmerited compassion."

"I am convinced," said his Lordship. "Go, my injured love, and bear him my forgiveness.—Tell him, that from me he has nothing to dread; but speak not of Lady Jane, for I will never, while I live, consent to his being mentioned to her more."

The Marchioness, pressing his hand eagerly to her lips, fervently thanked him, adding, that she had been too greatly shocked by the effect which her former effort had upon her mother, ever to make another. Then, with a countenance more angelic than human, and a step, light as the gossamer, she went upon the errand of mercy, in which she, though in few words, greatly exceeded her commission; assuring the Earl, it was the wish of the Marquis, to remove every unpleasant sensation from his Lordship's mind, and

that of the whole party—to have the pleasure of meeting him at dinner.

He expressed a sulky kind of gratitude to her, but declined the invitation; saying, he might possibly join them in the evening. He inquired, with some embarrassment, if his daughter's forgiveness had been a voluntary act.

The Marchioness replied, Lady Jane was, as yet, too ill to be able, to either determine for herself, or listen to the persuasions of others; but shat she did not doubt, a very little time would compose her mind, and allay her resentments.

A sullen silence ensuing on his Lordship's part, the Marchioness returned to her friends; and, with something of fear, confessed how [illegible] she had exceeded her instructions.

Instantly the thought of so unpleasant a meeting, threw a gloom over the face of Doctor Mirvan, as well as that of the Marquis;

Marquis; which being perceived by Lady Georgina, she drew from her pocket a letter; then, dropping on her knees at the feet of the Marchioness, with the letter in her hand, said aloud, "The humble petition of the Right Honourable the Duchess of M——, to her dearly beloved daughter, the Right Honourable the Marchioness of L——."

The Marchioness, at sight of the direction, eagerly caught the letter, saying, "It is, indeed, from her Grace!—Does she, too, deign to acknowledge me?—Then, I have nothing left to wish. Lord Belmont is forgiven—I am forgiven, and every body will be happy!" Then, opening the letter, she expressed her feelings, as she proceeded in the reading of it; at one part, saying, "How very kind!" at another, "Dear lady, this is too much!" And then, throwing it down, and clasping her hands in much agitation, said, "Not

forgive

forgive you, my dear—my honoured benefactress—protectress of my infancy?—But, I will go to you—I shall now have courage to talk of my affection, and my gratitude." Then, taking up the letter, she ran to Doctor Mirvan, saying, "Look, my good Sir—see how very kind your sister is!—And the Duke, too!—I will go to them—we will all go to them—yes, all, every one of us," looking at the Countess. "None of my friends will refuse at such a time as this—will they, Sir?"

"I am sure, they ought not," said the Doctor; "and, if they feel like me, they will not." Then, looking over the letter, he held it to the Marquis, adding, "See, my Lord Marquis, how well our Duchess writes."

A summons to dinner prevented any further comments upon her Grace's epistle; which was, in truth, deserving of approbation, containing expressions of unfeigned

feigned regret for the part which she had acted — her approbation of her son's choice, and her anxious wish to receive her late dear protegée, and now, dearer daughter's forgiveness, from her own lips.

This dinner might justly be called a festive board. The Marchioness appeared in a new character;—she talked, and laughed, and eat;—the soup was excellent—the ham delightful—the vegetables so sweet! In short, every thing was so good, that Lady Felix, who never was so well pleased as when folks eat a great deal, and praised what they eat, became almost riotous.

The Marquis was happy; Lady Georgina and Lord John in high spirits; and Doctor Mirvan, whose highest gratification was in the content of others, joined most cordially in their mirth. The Countess, alone, repressed her genuine feelings; and she did so, because they

were

were not in unison with those around her. Her participation in their joys, though ardent and sincere, could not conceal from her, that in the lottery of life, she had drawn a blank — that, though thoughtlessness and folly had hitherto rendered her blind to the evils which hung over her, those evils would come— nay, were arrived. She saw herself the wife of a man, who was alike bankrupt in character, principles, and fortune—the object of hatred—and contempt of all who were connected with him—and whose society was tolerated only from motives of prudence or humanity. She felt that, however separate their minds were, their interests were too nearly connected, to admit of a strict intimacy with those to whom he was irksome; even were his fortune such as would enable him to support his usual splendour. Nor was her own heart entirely silent; it upbraided

her,

her, at least, with vanity and weakness. She looked back with a sigh of regret, and forward with a feeling of dismay; yet, she struggled to conceal sensations, which, if known, could not lessen their poignancy, and might embitter the happiness of those whom she loved. She mourned in silence over her blighted prospects, and incessantly repined, that she had not earlier known the value of happiness. Even to Lord Belmont, she felt that she had been unjust, as whatever his conduct to others had been, to her it was ever generous and attentive. Her marriage with him had been voluntary; true, she had meant it as a mere frolic, and to gratify a foolish humour—but that he did not know. Such were her reflections.

To reflect at all, was new to Lady Belmont; yet she had a mind capable of the most exalted ideas. Nature had intended

fended her a place amongst her highest ornaments; but fashion—omnipotent fashion, had frustrated her design, by perverting the taste of its votary.

CHAP.

CHAP. XL.

DELIGHTED as was the Marchioness with the society she was amongst, it had not power to detain her from her duty to her mother; or to make her forget a promise she had made the Earl, to conduct him to the drawing-room. She, therefore, withdrew; and after remaining as long with Lady Jane as she would permit, went to his Lordship, who instantly attended her.

They found only the ladies present, the gentlemen being still in the eating-room. This hurt the delicate feelings of the Marchioness, who had expected they would have been ready to receive the Earl.

Earl. She immediately dispatched a message, signifying that Lord Belmont was there.

The summons was answered in person by Doctor Mirvan and Lord John Walsingham; but the Marquis had not sufficiently mastered his contempt, to be able to conduct himself according to the entreaties of his wife.

Lord John performed his part very well—so did Doctor Mirvan, until he saw the extended hand of the Earl, when, instead of meeting it, he gave what might, without exaggeration, be called a start backwards, and thrust his into his coat-pocket. An upbraiding look from the Marchioness recalled his recollection; and to retrieve his credit, he stammered out something about joy at seeing his Lordship look so vastly well.

"What should make him look otherwise?" cried Lady Felix. "He ha'n't been sick,

sick, though he staid up stairs.—A little glumpy, or so, to be sure—but that don't make one thinner."

The Earl's embarrassment was excessive; to relieve which, the Marchioness informed him of the most affectionate invitation of the Duke and Duchess of M——, and presented her Grace's letter; when, suddenly recollecting that it contained some reflections on his baseness, she hastily took it from him, and hurried it into her pocket.

"Lord bless me," said Lady Felix, whose good spirits made her more than usually witty, "how careful we all be, to-day!—Safe bind, safe find, seems, as Ned would say, to be the order of the day. Doctor Mirvan comes in—Lord Belmont walks up to him, and holds out his hand—Doctor Mirvan crams his into his pocket—Then comes the Marchioness, and gives his Lordship a letter—he opens, and

and is just going to begin to read it, when whisk it goes, pop into her Ladyship's pocket, as if he wer'n't fit to be trusted with nothing."

The entrance of the Marquis, in some degree, relieved the general confusion. He bowed with haughty distance to the Earl, and without speaking; which Lord Belmont's surprize at the extreme alteration in his countenance, nearly rendered him insensible of, and he remained for a moment with his eyes fixed upon his face. At this instant, his heart told him this was another of his exploits. The dinner scene was entirely reversed; there, all, but one, were happy—Here, all, but one, (Lady Felix) were, at least, very uncomfortable.

The Marchioness again talked of their intended journey; in which, she said, her mother would most readily accompany them; and Lady Georgina took this opportunity

portunity to present an invitation from the Duchess of M——, to Lady Felix, and to urge her acceptance of it. But her Ladyship, significantly shaking her head, said, "No, no, I have been to Lunnun once—if you catch me there again, I'll give you leave to say, 'Who is the fool then.' No more of your supper-dinners, and your breakfast-suppers for me. I sha'n't go there, nor no where else, to be made a mocking-stock, as I was; because I fell asleep one morning at supper; and a saucy jackanapes of a footman, I heard him, plain enough, say to another, 'Oh, damn it, never mind waking her, she will only think she is called up to feed the pigs.' Besides, I don't like their mean, stingy ways."

"Mean, stingy ways?" asked Lord John, "what are they, Lady Felix? I thought the error had lain on the other side."

"I don't

"I don't know nothing about the side it lays of," returned her Ladyship; "but it seems to me to lay of both sides, and they've got no good manners, to boot. There, I went, like a fool, as I was, to a heap of them there routs, as they call them, and they are routs, sure enough; for folks are for ever coming and going, for all the world like a fair; only there is nothing to amuse one."

Observing that Lord John and his sister listened with great attention to what she said, she proceeded:

"For my part, I used to push, might and main, through the crowd, till I got a seat, which seemed what every body was trying for, as if they hadn't got a chair at home; so, there I sat, looking at my thumbs and dying with heat, and in high luck, if I got a thimble-full of sour lemonade, or weak negus. For those that had no seats got all the ice, because they

were handier to snatch it. At last, I was one night so tired doing nothing, that I told the lady, that I didn't care if I played a hand at whisk; so, down I sat, and my partner scolded all the time, and said I knew nothing of the game. But I won, for all that; and so, it was an old lady I beat, and she said she must get change; so, off she went, but forgot to come back again; and so, that was gone. Well, that wer'n't the worst; for I played again, and lost five pints, they told me; so, I laid down half a crown, thinking how glad I was that mother didn't see me. But if she had, she would not have looked half so cross, as did the person who I was paying. After staring in my face, she said, 'What do you mean, Ma'am?—You will please to give me two guineas and an half.'

"Two guineas and an half?" asked I, out of breath.

"Yes,

'Yes, Ma'am," replied my partner, 'by your abominable play, I have lost two guineas and an half.' And, sure enough, she put them down to a gentleman, who walked off with them. Well, nothing was to be done, so, I paid it; and then, both the ladies told me I was out, now I had played two rubbers.

"I said, for the matter of that, I was deucedly out of pocket, and out in my reckoning, too, to pay half-guineas instead of sixpences; but I ought to know best, if I did not choose to play longer; besides, the other lady had not paid me the two *pints* I had won of her. So, then, they advised me to make haste, and look after her, or I would get short measure; but, just as I was going, they called to me to come back, and pay my cards.

"You can't think how shamed I was to hear myself dunned, as it were; so, I went back, and said, I could bring wit-

 nesses,

nesses, I had paid two guineas and a half; but she that won my money, said, I must put down the half-crown, which I had so neatly tried to put her off with; and lifting up the candlestick, I saw twenty shillings under it, and the cards never cost more than eight.

"Well, I saw it was in vain to talk, so I paid that, too, and came away, thinking I had made a pretty evening's work of it; and, to mend the matter, says I, not thinking of paying, I have had three glasses of negus—that will be eighteen-pence, at least; for if they charge twenty shillings for two packs of cards, they will certainly charge eighteen pence for three glasses of negus. So, on I brushed, scared out of my senses, for fear of being dunned again. At last, finding a waiter, I stopped him, saying, Sir, I have had three glasses of negus.

The man stared, and walked on.

Another

Another came.

"I repeated, that I had had three glasses of negus.

"He looked at me from top to toe; then said, presenting his tray to me, 'Take another, Ma'am.'

'Can't you see?' asked the first I had spoken to, who was just then passing, 'Can't you see, she has had enough already?'

"Now, I thought that very saucy. So, I told him, I was very ready to pay for what I had had; and they both tittered; and several of the fine gentlemen and ladies tittered too; and then I found I had done wrong. Yet, I can't see where the harm was, because I could see no difference between selling cards, and selling negus. But I went and sat down, and a lady came to me, and asked if I had got my two *pints*?

"I said,

"I said, no; I could not find the gentlewoman who owed me.

'Perhaps, you don't know her again,' says she.

"I told her, I believed that was the case. 'I will point her out to you,' says she. 'that is her, in the scarlet gownd.'

"I thanked her very kindly for her civility; and, going to the lady in the scarlet gownd, I courtesied.

"She bowed, but said nothing.

"Thinking she had forgot me, too, I said, I hope you got change, Ma'am?

"She looked at me very oddly; then said, at last, 'Madam!'

"I am the person, said I, you owe the two *pints* to.

'Owe you?' answered she, turning as red as a turkey-cock; 'I don't understand you.'

"Why, Ma'am, says I, I thinks I speaks plain enough; but if you hav'n't

a mind

a mind to pay it, I sha'n't make a fuss about the matter.

"As good luck would have it, Ned just then came up; and, on my telling him all about it, the lady and he laughed very much, and said somebody had been quizzing me. So, as I did not choose to be quizzed any more, I went home; and when I am caught at a route again, they may quiz as long as they like."

During this detail, which had most highly amused Lord John and his sister, the Marchioness had laboured, but with far less success, to entertain the Earl; and Doctor Mirvan having observed the Countess sitting alone, and lost in thought, placed himself beside her, asking, "Are the Lady Belmont's meditations intended for the benefit of the present or future generation?"

She replied, with a sigh, "They were wholly intended for her own use; she, or

her thoughts could be of service to no other earthly being."

"Wonderfully humble," said the Doctor; "I must suppose your father confessor has been with you, and imposed this as a day of penance and humiliation."

"All my future days will be days of penance and humiliation;" she mournfully replied.

"How is this?—Am I to believe my senses?"

"In verity; and my words also."

"Were I to report that which I have now heard, no soul would believe me."

"Probably not; they are, however, strictly true."

"Better and better!—So, your thoughts and actions can be of no use?"

"None; unless, 'to point a moral, or adorn a tale."

"You are right; they will yet adorn many a tale. Come, come, Lady Belmont,

mont, this humour must not be indulged; the world must not be told, that the brilliant—the witty——"

Here, interrupting him, she emphatically pronounced, "Where be her gibes, now — her gambols—her songs — her flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table in a roar?—Not one, now, to mock her own grinning—quite chopfallen—Alas! poor Yorick!"

A tear which had reached her cheek, was hastily dashed away.

"But, that Yorick," said Doctor Mirvan, "has discouraged me, by ther esolution of confining her thoughts to herself; I came to ask a corner in them. I am, Lady Belmont, an ambitious man; and, ever since you told me what you could have done for Sir Harry Faulkner, had he not been unworthy, I have dreamed of nothing but rivalling him in your affections."

She raised her eyes to his face, and shook her head.

He continued: "Aye, that is all very well for a beginning; but I shall not be so easily disheartened. Your late friend was dexterous in flying from a falling house—my pride would be to prop one. That of Lord Belmont totters.—Will you employ me?—Will you use your interest to prevail with him to look into his affairs, and to receive such services as I can do him; assisted by more powerful aid, the aid of his angellic grand-daughter, who pants to prove her duty to *him*, and her gratitude and affection to *you*? Lady Jane has resigned all claim to the money bequeathed her: it is an ample sum, and it is her ardent desire, that so much of it as will relieve the difficulties of the Earl, may be instantly applied to that purpose."

Lady Belmont grasped his hand; but, finding

finding herself unable to speak, hurried out of the room.

The party now broke up; and the following day, preparations were made for removing to town, Doctor Mirvan and the Earl excepted, who had departed that morning for Alderman Twaddle's, preparatory to the arranging his Lordship's affairs; and Lady Felix, who adhered to her determination of going no more to Lunnun to be quizzed.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

HAVING conducted my heroine to the haven of her wishes, I have little more to add, than that she arrived safe at the Duke of M——'s; where she was received by his Grace and the Duchess, with every mark of distinction and affection which their invention could suggest, or her wishes could ask. Nor was their reception of Lady Jane less flattering. On her Ladyship's expressing the unbounded gratitude which she felt for the noble and generous protection they had given to her deserted daughter, they interrupted her by the most animated assurance, of their being greatly overpaid, by

by receiving her as the wife of their son; and must, henceforth, hold themselves as the obliged, and her Ladyship as the person to whom obligation was due, for her approval of a marriage, which had secured his happiness, and given to their family the brightest ornament it could boast.

The Duchess would have apologized for her conduct, had not lady Jane entreated her to be silent on a subject which must recal to her wounded mind, the depravity and unnatural inhumanity of a father, to whose worldly interest she had sacrificed every thing which was dear—every thing which was desirable in life.

Her Grace, who felt that she had been both the tool and dupe of that father, was little disposed to combat the just resentments of her Ladyship, and gladly refrained from the acknowledgment of errors, the commission of which, she could not but feel, had deprived her of

that infallibility of character, to which she had hitherto laid claim; and this, in the eyes of Lady Belmont, the being on earth whom she the most hated, and the most dreaded; and whose near connection with the parties, left her in no doubt of the publicity of her weakness and credulity, and increased her reluctance to renewing the acquaintance.

This, Lady Georgina, and her brothers, backed by the influence of the Marchioness, assiduously laboured to accomplish, and were, at last, successful, as far as a few ceremonious visits went; but which were shortly discontinued on the part of the Countess, who protested, that half an hour of her Grace's wisdom, was infinitely worse than a six weeks nervous fever; and that, the moment she entered her presence, she conceived herself in the situation of some unlucky school-girl, tight laced to a back-board and steel

collar, introduced to receive a lecture upon her own naughtiness.

To say the truth, her Ladyship's society had not been much more agreeable to the Duchess, who could not but observe the ill-concealed ridicule with which she was listened to when speaking to others, or the total inattention, when the conversation was addressed to herself.

With the Duke, she had had better fortune; having secured his good opinion, by a warm defence of the present war; which, she insisted, was not only just and necessary, but useful and agreeable. In support of which assertion, she produced so many undeniable proofs of fortunes accumulated—titles acquired, and pensions obtained, as to convince her auditors, that the war had, undoubtedly, been useful, and as undoubtedly agreeable; which so elated his Grace, that he complimented her on her immense powers

of persuasion, which had made more converts in ten minutes, than all his efforts had effected in as many years.

Encouraged by so powerful an ally, he frequently ventured into the broad field of politics; in which, as the Duchess was particularly averse to the subject, he was always supported by her Ladyship; until one unfortunate day, when she found that, through the skilful manœuvres of her Grace, the discordant topic must drop, from the want of contradiction. To provoke the Duke to proceed, she changed sides, and became, in one moment, from the idolizer of aristocracy, to the determined advocate of equality. She ridiculed titles, foretelling their speedy decline; as a proof of which, she insisted upon the little estimation in which they were already held, when the card of the wife of a simple knight was left—her name announced—and her person received

ceived by the same stile and title, as the wife of his Grace's second son would be. She was aware that it would be alleged, this was only for the sake of designation, which she was ready to admit; but with this remark: The distinction which it destroyed, would, in less enlightened times, have been deemed of somewhat greater consequence than that which it established; inasmuch as the mistaking a lady's residence could be only a temporary inconvenience, while the mistaking precedence between ladies would probably have been the source of lasting enmity.

Conviction, as usual, followed her words; but the Duke, either unwilling to grace her triumph; or anxious to be again on terms, with so good and great an ally, endeavoured to subsidize her by compliments. And then, to change the subject, congratulated her on the late

change

change in the administration, to several of whom she had expressed very great objections; but here he was not more successful, for, like some other powers, she accepted the bribe to employ it against the giver. Shaking her head, she replied, with a gravity unusual to her, That, until the present system of things was changed, she saw no reason for gratulation from such an event; as, if those ci-devant ministers were to remain at large, it was no more than letting so many birds of prey loose upon mankind.

His Grace declared, that he did not comprehend her Ladyship, and asked what she would have done with them.

She calmly said, "I would have their heads cut off, my Lord Duke."

He accused her of malice, and inquired what they had been guilty of.

"They have been ministers," she replied. And in giving this opinion, she begged

begged not to be understood as having any particular dislike to those gentlemen, who, she believed in her conscience, to be as honest and as fit to live, as any which had preceded them; but that, in her decision, she had meant to include all who had or should occupy the same situations which they had quitted, they being, in her mind, for ever after, troublesome subjects, bad citizens, and dangerous members of society.

This extraordinary assertion, drawing upon her the whole attention of the company, her Ladyship proceeded:

"Placed on a summit, almost beyond the reach of punishment, with the happiness of thousands at their disposal—possessed of the power to oblige many, and under the positive necessity of disobliging more;—their ears assailed by pleaders—their tables loaded with petitions—solicited by friends—threatened by enemies —flattered

—flattered by dependents,—is it to be wondered if their hearts became hardened?—Compelled to practise deception, is it surprizing they become deceitful? What can be expected from men, whose daily occupation it is to commit acts of injustice, by lavishing favours on the worthless, and neglecting unfriended merit?—Whose trade it is to feed with false hopes, or weary with delay? No, no; such a school may make good ministers, but it must destroy good men. They descend with reluctance from a station, where they have been taught to believe, the homage which they received, had been paid to their abilities; and where, if truth ever reached their ear, it was ascribed to envy. Big with self-consequence, they exact obedience—used to despotism, they practise oppression—inured to artifice, they are not to be relied on. Yes, I am right; those men who have lived so long for

for the good of their country, ought to die to secure its welfare."

Doctor Mirvan here begged to interpose a few considerations in behalf of these unfortunate men, before the guillotine was applied. In the first place, for every favour which a minister had to bestow, there were, on a moderate calculation, ten expectants.—Now, but one of these could be gratified.

Here, her Ladyship observed, that in that case, it was but nine to one in favour of the least meritorious.

The Doctor continued: "The rest are dissatisfied. Were they to be informed on their first application, that they must not hope to succeed; as greater services, or greater interest would have the preference, the supplicants would complain of incivility. If they are kept in suspense, although, at the time, it is possible the giver knows not on which of them

them he must bestow his favours, they term it having been deceived with false hopes, which rendered duplicity an act of necessity, rather than of choice."

"Granted! granted!" cried her Ladyship. "Did you suppose, my good Sir, I meant to infer, that giving a man the title of Prime Minister, had the same effect as inoculating him for the small-pox?"

"By no means; my purpose reached no further than to have it comprehended, that the constant practice of dissimulation, made it habitual—that subduing every feeling of humanity rendered the heart callous—and that repeated acts of injustice were apt to make a man less scrupulous. All of which, I imagine, from your prologue, you intended to admit. I ask no more; I did not object to the necessity for his having all these acquirements; I only insisted upon his possession of

of them; and the necessity of preventing his employing them, after they had ceased to be useful."

Her Ladyship, now, perceiving the Earl, who had himself, been, during many years, a member of administration, to be highly offended; and the Duchess sufficiently wearied, made her adieus, leaving both those noble personages without the smallest desire for an early repetition of the visit, in which indifference the rest of their Grace's family by no means united, being strongly attached to the person, and fascinated by the manners of this eccentric woman, whose depression of spirits, occasioned by depression of fortune, had been effectually relieved by the timely interference of the Marchioness, and the unhoped-for liberality of her Ladyship's own father, which had enabled her to resume her former habits and place in society, with additional

tional splendour, and increased avidity. Her late eclipse appearing rather to have sharpened than blunted her appetite.

Lord Morpeth was now selected as her declared cecisbeo. On her mentioning, previous to her engagement with his Lordship, that there was a vacancy in this department, Doctor Mirvan had offered his services, which, she informed him, would have been most gladly accepted, had not an intimate knowledge of her own heart convinced her, that she must take no one into her service, whom it would be possible to love, having learned, from her experience, that her only security was in the absence of temptation.

Lord John Walsingham, now, pressed his suit, as a person perfectly qualified; but, she assured him, he could be received on no other terms, than his consenting to officiate in a mask. Else she should be

perpetually

perpetually mistaking him for his mother, which would so effectually cramp both her genius and her temper, as to render her pleasing to no one, and his employment very disagreeable to himself.

Amidst the vortex of dissipation, folly, and extravagance, in which she was again immersed, some bright gleams now and then broke forth, to illumine the dark shades in her character—some act of beneficence, performed with a grace and liberality, which rendered it, in a ten-fold degree, gratifying to the obliged; and caused her friends to regret, that she was not oftener seen in employments, for the which nature had so particularly endowed her with powers to excel.

One of these acts of generosity being the subject of conversation when the Duchess of M—— was present, her Grace observed, that Lady Belmont's good deeds always reminded her of what

she

she had heard said, of the feasts of misers; —that they were withheld until they had obtained the contempt of the world, and were then given with a profusion and extravagance which excited its ridicule.

The Earl of Belmont, whose interest it had now become to see his grand-daughter restored to her rights, lost no time in proving the justice of her claim; and she was at once presented and received as the daughter of Lady Jane Twaddle, and the wife of the Marquis of L——. Notwithstanding the silence which had been observed by those who were the best acquainted with the conduct of the Earl, sufficient had transpired to render him the object of universal abhorrence—even those who frequented his house, and partook of the delicacies and convenience which it afforded, affected to shun him in every other place. His situation was truly deplorable. Driven from society, he

must

must not go abroad—shuddering at solitude, he could not stay at home. Old age came armed with ten-fold terrors—his constitution, hitherto uncommonly good, now gave way. Extreme debility seized on every part, except his mind; which, as if for his punishment, retained its natural vigour. His temper, ever haughty and overbearing, was now soured by disappointment and infirmity.

The Countess, either from motives of humanity, or love of notoriety, remained with his Lordship for one whole week; but whether, in that time, her compassion had been exhausted, or her ambition satisfied, is not certain. Be it which it might, it had left her so completely satisfied with what she had had of his society, as to prevent her ever after from intruding upon him for one moment longer than necessity demanded; and those moments were usually passed in

upbraidings on his part; which were treated with contemptuous silence, or replied to by the most pointed ridicule on her's.

Thus was he left, deprived of character, temper, and health, to all the horrors of solitude: unable to look back upon his past life without shame, or forward to a future without dread. Forsaken by his relations—friends he had none—hated by his enemies—and despised by the very menials which his bounty fed. He experienced every evil incidental to human nature, save that of poverty; and for this single blessing, he was indebted to the being he had sought to crush, and to whose forgiving spirit he owed all the consolation of pity for his sufferings, or solicitude to lessen them which reached him, as Lady Jane could never be prevailed upon to see him.

In this miserable state he languished

through

through several years; and, at last, resigned a life, unmarked by any act of benevolence, leaving behind him a name, which, by the few who remembered it, was mentioned with pity or contempt. Yet, he had possessed talents, which, honourably employed, would have benefited that society to which he had been a pest, and done credit to a nobility which his vices had disgraced.

His daughter had been prevailed on to send him her forgiveness, and upon receiving the intelligence of his death, repeated it, fervently praying, he might meet with pardon from that power he had so greatly offended.

The Duchess of M——, who was present, made some comment on his errors, in which she was interrupted by the Marchioness, who said, "Madam, the Earl is dead!—Peace be to his ashes—let his

faults lie buried with his failings, which, however great they may have been, were severely punished here, and, I trust, that he is now gone to receive the reward of his sufferings, and that he will meet with more mercy from that unerring being, than he has found from those, who, never having been exposed to the like temptations, cannot, without presumption, say, they would not have fallen like him."

With the wretched Nugent, who, like his employer, carried a thorn in his bosom, but was enabled to fly for ever from a country to which his vices had been a scourge, shall end the history of the Earl of Belmont. And here would end my history, were I left to my own judgment; but, it seems, I am called upon, by imperious custom, to render some account of the other actors in my drama, of whom I have so little to say, that

that I might well be excused saying that little; yet, lest my prologue should be longer than my piece, I shall proceed.

The Marquis, and his deserving partner, I have said, were happy. They remained so—pleased with themselves, and beloved by all who knew them. It was impossible it should be otherwise.

Lady Jane, whose spirits and constitution had sunk, under long afflictions, enjoyed, in the society of her family, all the happiness of which she was capable.

The Duchess of M——, when she could forget Lord Belmont, continued to think herself infallible.

His Grace continued to think and talk on politics, when any person would listen to him.

Lady Georgina retained her good spirits, and employed them so effectually in restoring the depressed ones of Mr. Delville, that it was hoped and believed by

 those

those who loved them, that her exertions had gained her a heart, whose value in her estimation was incalculable; and that a few weeks would give him possession of the only woman he had ever deemed worthy to displace Geraldwood Orphan.

Lord John Walsingham remained a bachelor, protesting, he had not, as yet, met with a fair one, whose divine perfections could entitle her to the affections of him, whose notable prowess and valorous deeds, had enabled him to dispute the palm of notoriety with Gala Hope and Monk Lewis.

Sir Harry Faulkner, of whose prudence and good management the Countess had been very communicative, met all the reward which his selfish conduct merited—the equal contempt of those who had approved, and those who had disapproved his intimacy with her Ladyship.

ship. Every man thought it derogatory to his character, to be called his friend; and every woman was persuaded, that it was not her interest to be such. Lady Belmont, alone, treated him with civility, when they met; never failing to inquire after the health of Lady Faulkner, expressing vast commiseration for her numberless bodily infirmities, and her own approbation of Sir Harry's uncommon solicitude to preserve so amiable and interesting a partner; until, weary of the continual mirth which she excited, he refrained from visiting those places where she was to be found; although, by so doing, he was deprived of his highest ambition—that of fluttering amongst the gayest of the gay world. Nor did he well know where to go—home he had none—at least, none which he could relish. His wife, in her best days, had not possessed those qualities which constitute

the useful friend, or the agreeable companion. She was one of those quiet, insipid beings, who conceived every merit, and every virtue, to consist in those of fidelity and economy—in whose society a man must look forward with horror, to a November evening. She was the reverse of Lady Belmont, and Sir Harry felt that she was so, and incessantly cursed the selfish policy, which had lost him her affection. Indeed, he once endeavoured to reinstate himself by renewed protestations of unabated love; but shaking her head, and laughing, she said, "Think of your character, Sir Harry—the opinion of the world—the curiosity of neighbours—the talking of servants.—No, no; you shall never more venture such hair-breadth escapes. What is become of your prudence, my amiable friend?—Does it nod—or have you forgotten the probability, that such an improvident animal

animal as I am, may again be in difficulties? No, no, keep to your idol; you can never more be mine." Then, sweetly singing, "But now the mask's thrown off, I scorn to waste one thought on you, Donald," left him a prey to every humiliating sensation.

Lord Felix, now Earl of Belmont, had, upon the embarrassment of his father's affairs, in which his own were involved, found it necessary to travel; and remained abroad, until he was informed of his father's daily expected demise, when he embarked for England, and had reached Harwich; where, learning that Buonaparte had returned from Egypt, he again embarked, and soon found himself in Paris; where, being destitute of pass-ports, recommendations, or credentials of any kind, when called upon to give an account of himself, farther than his declaration that his sole motive for being in

 France,

France, was to have a peep at Buonaparte; he was clapped into prison on suspicion of having been the inventor of La Machine Infernale; and more British gold being discovered in his possession than was often seen in France, strongly corroborated the idea of his being bribed by Pitt's guineas. A letter was likewise found in his pocket, which put the matter beyond a doubt. This epistle was from his Lordship's wife, Lady Felix; and which, from her having misplaced a few letters, omitted others, and put in some superfluous ones, could not, in many parts, be decyphered by their most learned interpreters, and it was, therefore, determined to be written in some unknown characters. Nor were those passages which appeared to be English, much more intelligible; unless they were construed as a confirmation of some diabolical plan. For instance: her Ladyship, in

in speaking of her domestic concerns, amongst which the heroes and heroines that adorned every walk in her garden, claimed no small share in her attention, says, "The last hurricane carried away "poor Buonaparte's wig; and the next "high wind, I can see plain enough, will "take off his head."

At this passage, every officer of the municipality shuddered, and exclaimed, "Sacre Dieu!"

Then followed, "Orleans is quite "dead; and I don't much care, as I ne-"ver look much to him: but Antoinette "comes on surprizingly—I think she "will soon be bigger than the Irish "giant."

Here the most sagacious were puzzled; nor was she in speaking of her family more intelligible, as they could not imagine what, "beating mother all hollow "in the black sort," meant.

Not

Not feeling any inclination to credit his Lordship's assertion, who was ready to die with laughter, while he made it, that nothing more than pigs were here spoken of, or that Buonaparte was simply a yew-tree; he was remanded to his prison, whence he had sent this communication to his family, who were, in consequence, pursuing proper methods to obtain his liberation.

As to Lady Felix, no person had been more diverted by her Lord's adventure, than herself. The idea of having puzzled the French wise-acres, would have afforded her ample amusement, had not her attention been called to more serious concerns, by the certainty that Ned would return half starved; to repair which, it was necessary to provide a double stock of good things, as, she would be bound, he'd be glad enough then, to pay a visit to Beech Grove. In the mean time, her

Ladyship gave herself no uneasiness about his situation; indeed, he had not merited her concern, having never passed a week together with her from her first leaving town; notwithstanding which, he had contrived to keep her in tolerable good humour with him. In truth, she was seldom otherwise with any one, giving the whole of her attention to her garden and dumb creatures, unless a guest called upon her for the offices of hospitality, when every other consideration gave way. And if she failed to render them happy, it was not from want of *labouring* to do so.

Mr. and Mrs. Twaddle went on in the old path—he getting money, and she saving it, the whole of which gettings and savings, it was supposed, would center in the Marquis of L——'s family; the old couple, notwithstanding their son persisted to disown her, being exceedingly

ingly proud of their grand-daughter, insomuch, that he proposed their second son taking the name of Twaddle of Blue-Ball Manor. Against which, the Duchess violently declaimed, protesting, that the mines of Peru should not bribe her to admit a Twaddle, with or without his Blue Balls, into her family,

Mr. Fitzroy remained faithful to his first affection—a retired, melancholy man.

Mr. Joseph Twaddle, we have said, persisted in refusing to acknowledge his daughter. His conduct, which had, in the first instance, been dictated by policy, and continued from obstinacy, gave little uneasiness to any of the parties concerned.

Lady Jane, satisfied in her own integrity, felt rather comforted in the certainty that her child's affections were not shared by the object of her fixed aversion

aud

and contempt; nor could the Marchioness greatly repine at the loss of a father whom she had never known, and who, from her birth, had endeavoured to brand her with infamy, and whose life had been a libel on the name of gentleman. For some years he had swaggered in the polite world—the prey of sharpers, and the ridicule of needy women of fashion, until his power of administering to their wants had ceased; when, finding himself deserted, he sought consolation in the bottle, which, in a very short time, drowned the small share of understanding, and still smaller degree of feeling, which nature, in her most parsimonious humour, had bestowed. He was now an unwieldy, stupid being, with a bloated countenance, and vacant eye—without any other ambition than that of being the king of his company—or any other boast, than the ability to swallow

more

more at a draught than any of his associates. But from such a wretch, the eye of my readers will gladly turn—even to the insignificant Mr. and Mrs. Walton, who continued to plague each other, and to afford mirth to their acquaintance.

However we may have appeared to have neglected our friend Mark, that was by no means the case with those whom he had so essentially served; they having contested whose right it was, to render him happy. This, there was some difficulty in any of them accomplishing, owing to the numerous depredations which were registered against him at the Old Bailey, which rendered the public character, in which it was his ambition to officiate, somewhat hazardous—it being no less than that exalted one, of own coachman to his beloved Geraldwood. Power, and all-powerful gold, however, prevailed, and enable us to leave him, at the

the close of these memoirs, in possession of the summit of his wishes—valued by his employers, and beloved by his fellow-servants; but, above all, in the daily receipt of a recognizing nod, and an approving smile, from the idol of his fondest affection; of whose infant beauty, and early wit, it was his delight to boast.

With my favourite, Doctor Mirvan, I shall conclude this history. Yet, of him I can say nothing which my readers will not have anticipated. He continued to reflect lustre upon his profession, and to possess the hearts of the wise and honourable part of mankind, and to be feared and respected by the dissolute and unprincipled. Mild and unassuming in his manners, he won the homage which his abilities might have commanded. Feeling and generous, he could pity and palliate the errors of which he was incapable himself; nor did he deem it any merit,

merit, that distress had never sued to him in vain. He was——But as this character really exists, and may condescend to peruse these pages, I will forbear more particularly to point him out, although convinced, that he would, himself, be the last to affix to it its rightful owner.

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